10-STORY DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

ALL DIFFERENT!

MARCH

10¢

BULLETS ON BLUE MONDAY
By HAROLD F. SORENSEN

MURDER—IN THE BAG
By THOMAS LAMAR

FALSE TEETH

$6.85 to $35.00

—BY MAIL—

SEND NO MONEY

Posed by a Professional Model

THE TESTIMONIAL LETTERS WE PUBLISH are communications that customers have sent to us without solicitation and without pay. We have large numbers of such missives. We never print anyone's letter without previous consent. We believe that each of our customers who has written to us enthusiastically indorsing our dental plates is sincere. We do not, however, intimate or represent that you will receive the same results in an instance that those customers describe. What is important to you is that when you pay for our teeth, WE GUARANTEE IF YOU ARE NOT 100% SATISFIED IN EVERY RESPECT WITH THE TEETH WE WILL MAKE FOR YOU, AFTER YOU HAVE WORN THEM AS LONG AS 60 DAYS, WE WILL GLADLY REFUND TO YOU EVERY CENT YOU HAVE PAID US FOR THEM.

BEFORE **AFTER**

Mrs. Elsie Boland of Norton, Kansas, writes:

"Enclosed find two pictures. One shows how I looked before I got my teeth; the other one afterwards. Your teeth are certainly beautiful. I have not had mine out since the day I got them, except to clean them."

Harry Willoughby, Adairville, Kentucky, writes:

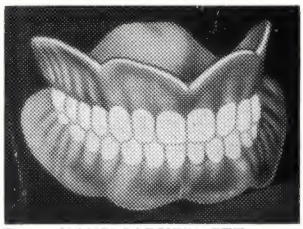
"I have received my teeth and am PROUD OF THEM."

Mrs. Geo. G. Conklin, Bridgeport, Connecticut, writes:

"I received my set of teeth. I wear them day and night. I have good reason to be well pleased with them. Thank you very much."

MADE - TO - MEASURE DENTAL PLATES DIRECT FROM OUR LABORATORY TO YOU

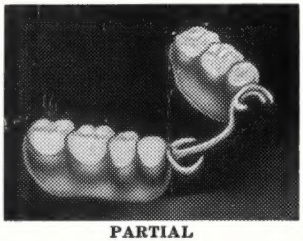
We make to measure for you **individually** — BY MAIL — Dental Plates for men and women—from an impression of your own mouth taken by you at your home. We have **thousands of customers** all over the country wearing teeth we made by mail at sensible prices.



HAND-CARVED SET

AT ROCK-BOTTOM PRICES

If you find out what others have paid for theirs, you will be astounded when you **see how little ours will cost you!** By reading our catalog, you will learn how to **save half or more on dental plates for yourself.** Monthly payments possible.



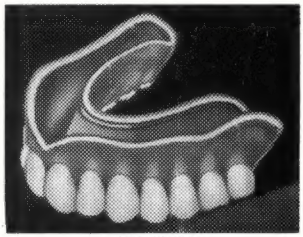
PARTIAL

ON 60 DAYS' TRIAL

Make us prove every word we say. Wear our teeth on trial for as long as 60 days. Then, if you are not **perfectly satisfied** with them, they will not cost you a cent.

WITH MONEY - BACK GUARANTEE OF SATISFACTION

We take this risk. We guarantee that if you are not **completely satisfied** with the teeth we make for you, then any time within 60 days we will immediately refund every cent you have paid us for them. **We take your word.** You are the judge.



ROOFLESS

HIGH-GRADE MATERIAL AND EXPERT WORKMANSHIP

TRY our practically unbreakable ROOFLESS, PARTIAL and TRANSLUCENT plates. Our dentures are set with **pearly-white, genuine, porcelain teeth;** constructed from **high-grade materials,** with **expert workmanship,** to give **long service.** We make **all styles** of plates. **A dentist who has had many years' experience** in making **dental plates supervises the making of each plate. . . .**

FREE IMPRESSION MATERIAL, Catalog with our new low prices and information. Don't put this off. Do it TODAY! CLIP COUPON OR WRITE. A one cent postcard with name and address plainly written is all that is necessary.

We also Repair or Reproduce Old Plates—48-hour Service

UNITED STATES DENTAL COMPANY

Dr. Ernest French, Supervisor of Laboratory

1555 Milwaukee Ave., Dept. 3-92, Chicago, Ill.

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW

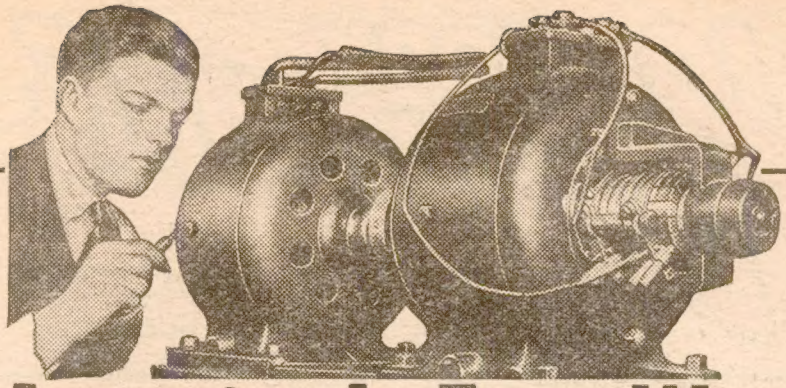
FREE **UNITED STATES DENTAL COMPANY**

Dept. 3-92, 1555 Milwaukee Ave.,
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

Send, without obligation, your FREE impression material, catalog, and information.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....
(Print Clearly)



Amazingly Easy Way to get into ELECTRICITY

I'LL FINANCE YOUR TRAINING

Don't spend your life hoping for a better job and a better salary. *Let me show you how to train for positions that lead to $35.00, $40.00 a week and up in the great field of Electricity.* NOT by correspondence but by actual shop work right on real electrical machinery. Then on my "PAY AFTER GRADUATION" PLAN YOU CAN PAY YOUR TUITION AFTER YOUR TRAINING PERIOD IS OVER IN EASY MONTHLY PAYMENTS.

Learn Without Books in 90 DAYS

Lack of experience—age, or advanced education bars no one. I don't care if you don't know an armature from an air brake—I don't expect you to! It makes no difference! Don't let lack of money stop you. Most of the men at Coyne have no more money than you have. That's why I have worked out my astonishing offers.

Earn While Learning

If you need part-time work to help pay your living expenses I'll help you get it. Then, in 12 brief weeks, in the great roaring shops of Coyne, I train you as you never dreamed you could be trained...on one of the greatest outlays of electrical apparatus ever assembled . . . real dynamos, engines, power plants, autos, switchboards, transmitting stations...everything from doorbells to farm power and lighting . . . full-sized . . . in full operation every day!

PREPARE FOR JOBS LIKE THESE

Our Employment Bureau for graduates gives FREE lifetime employment service.

Armature Winder
Sub-Station Operator
Auto & Aviation Ignition
Maintenance Electrician
Service Station Owner
Air Conditioning
Electric Refrigeration
Radio Servicing
and many others

we help to make you a master electrician so you can cash in on the opportunities ahead.

Jobs, Pay, Future

To get a good job today you've got to be trained. Industry demands men who have specialized training. These men will be the ones who are the big-pay men of the future. After graduation my Employment Department gives you Lifetime Employment Service. J. O. Whitmeyer says: "After I graduated, the School Employment Service furnished me with a list of several positions . . . I secured a position with an Electrical Construction Company, paying me 3 to 4 times more a week than I was getting before I entered Coyne and today I am still climbing to higher pay."

RADIO

Right now I'm including an extra 4 weeks' Radio Course at no extra tuition charge.

Get the Facts

Coyne is your one great chance to get into electricity. Every obstacle is removed. This school is 40 years old—Coyne training is tested and proven. You can get training first—then pay for it in easy monthly payments after you graduate. You can find out everything absolutely free. Simply mail the coupon and let me send you the big, free Coyne book ...facts...jobs...salaries...opportunities. This does not obligate you. So act at once. Just mail coupon.

Get this FREE Book

No Books—No Classes

No dull books, no baffling charts, no classes, you get individual training . . . all real actual work . . . building real batteries . . . winding real armatures, operating real motors, dynamos and generators, wiring houses, etc., etc. That's a glimpse of how

THE HOME OF COYNE

This is our fireproof, modern home wherein is installed thousands of dollars' worth of the newest and most modern Electrical equipment of all kinds. Every comfort and convenience has been arranged to make you happy and contented during your training.

H. C. LEWIS, Pres.
COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL, DEPT. 31-61
500 S. Paulina Street, Chicago, Illinois

Dear Mr. Lewis:

Without obligation send me your big free catalog and all details of Free Employment Service, the 4 weeks Radio Course and how you will finance my tuition and how I can "earn while learning." I understand I will not be bothered by any salesman.

Name.....

Address.....

City.....*State*.....

COYNE ELECTRICAL SCHOOL
H. C. Lewis, Pres., Dept. 31-61
500 S. Paulina St. Founded 1899 CHICAGO, ILL.

10-STORY DETECTIVE MAGAZINE

ALL STAR
ALL DIFFERENT

Vol. V MARCH, 1941 No. 2

★ **BULLETS ON BLUE MONDAY (Novelette)** Harold Francis Sorensen 6
Steve McKenna's jinx catches up with him when he becomes a corpse bodyguard for a day.

★ **PASS-KEY TO THE MORGUE.** . . . . Ernest Johnson 23
This criminal plays a gun game that has a suicide goal.

★ **SLEUTH BY PROXY** . . . . . Fred Dawson 35
A phonograph checker hears the disc of doom.

★ **MURDER—IN THE BAG (Novelette)** . . Thomas Lamar 46
The newshawk forgets to reserve space for himself in the obituary column.

★ **DAGGERS OF DOOM** . . . . . Marty Lyle 59
Five grand isn't much—when it turns into crimson currency.

★ **BOOMERANG SWAG** . . . . . Harris Clivesey 71
His money madness bucks the Grim Reaper's greed—for cadavers.

★ **CASE OF THE LIVING CORPSE** . . . . Paul Selonke 76
Detective Kendall's curiosity flings him into a homicide hangout.

★ **PHANTOM HIDEOUT** . . . . . Stanley King 86
Macabre mystery haunts the tower of Seaside Inn.

★ **CRYSTAL CLUE** . . . . . Leon Dupont 95
Transparent evidence throws a killer into the hot-squat shadow.

★ **HOMICIDE LEGACY** . . . . . Kenneth McNary 98
From the women's prison, Private Detective Clark receives a fatal key that will unlock the gates to hell.

Cover by Norman Saunders

10-STORY DETECTIVE, published bi-monthly by Periodical House, Inc. Rose Wyn, President. Office of Publication, 29 Worthington Street, Springfield, Mass. Editorial and executive offices, 67 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y. Entered as Second Class matter, October 15, 1937, at the Post Office at Springfield, Mass., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Copyright, 1941, Periodical House, Inc. For advertising rates address Ace Fiction Group, 67 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y. While great care is exercised in the handling of manuscripts this magazine assumes no responsibility for their safety. Yearly subscription, 60 cents; single copy, 10 cents.

J. E. SMITH, President
National Radio Institute Established 25 years

Find out today how I Train You at Home to BE A RADIO TECHNICIAN

If you can't see a future in your present job, feel you'll never make much more money; if you're in a seasonal field, subject to lay offs, IT'S TIME NOW to investigate Radio. Trained Radio Technicians make good money, and you don't have to give up your present job or leave home to learn Radio. I train you at home nights in your spare time.

Why Many Radio Technicians Make $30, $40, $50 a Week

Radio broadcasting stations employ operators, technicians. Radio manufacturers employ testers, inspectors, servicemen in good-pay jobs. Radio jobbers, dealers, employ installation and servicemen. Many Radio Technicians open their own Radio sales and repair businesses and make $30, $40, $50 a week. Others hold their regular jobs and make $5 to $10 a week fixing Radios in spare time. Automobile, Police, Aviation, Commercial Radio; Loudspeaker Systems, Electronic Devices are other fields offering opportunities for which N.R.I. gives the required knowledge of Radio. Television promises to open good jobs soon.

Many Make $5 to $10 a Week Extra In Spare Time While Learning

The day you enroll, I start sending you Extra Money Job Sheets—start showing you how to do Radio repair jobs. Throughout your Course I send plans and directions which have helped many make $5 to $10 a week extra in spare time while learning. I send special Radio equipment to conduct experiments and build circuits. This 50-50 training method makes learning at home interesting, fascinating, practical. YOU ALSO GET A MODERN, PROFESSIONAL ALL-WAVE, ALL-PURPOSE SET SERVICING INSTRUMENT to help you make money fixing Radios while learning and equip you for full time work after you graduate.

Find Out What Radio, Television Offer You—Mail Coupon

Act Today! Mail the coupon for my 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." It points out Radio's spare time and full time opportunities and those coming in Television; tells about my Course in Radio and Television; shows more than 100 letters from men I have trained, telling what they are doing and earning. Read my money back agreement. MAIL COUPON in an envelope or paste on a penny postcard—NOW!

J. E. SMITH, President
Dept. ICA8, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.

MAIL NOW · Get 64 page book FREE

J. E. SMITH, President, Dept. ICA8
National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

Mail me FREE, without obligation, your 64-page book, "Rich Rewards in Radio." (No salesman will call. Write plainly.)

Age .....

Name .....

Address .....

City ..... State .....

DOWN GO TIRE PRICES

On GOODYEAR FIRESTONE-GOODRICH and Other Standard Makes

Only our **25 years' experience**, big buying power and volume production make it possible to offer these **amazing** tire **values**. Think of it; **Standard Brand** reconditioned tires, serviceably repaired by experts with high-grade materials at a fraction of original cost. Order now. Enjoy the tremendous savings our cut prices make possible.

$1.85 28-4.75-19

BALLOON TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
29x4.40-21	$1.85	$0.85
29x4.50-20	1.85	.85
30x4.50-21	1.85	.85
28x4.75-19	1.85	.95
29x4.75-20	2.10	.95
29x5.00-19	2.25	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.40	1.05
5.25-17	2.45	1.15
28x5.25-18	2.45	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.45	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.50	1.15
31x5.25-21	2.80	1.15
5.50-17	2.75	1.15
28x5.50-18	2.75	1.15
29x5.50-19	2.75	1.15
6.00-16	3.15	1.45
6.00-17	2.85	1.15
30x6.00-18	2.85	1.15
31x6.00-19	2.85	1.15
32x6.00-20	2.95	1.25
33x6.00-21	3.10	1.25
32x6.50-20	3.20	1.35

TRUCK BALLOONS

Size	Tires	Tubes
6.00-20	$3.10	$1.65
6.50-20	3.35	1.95
7.00-20	4.60	2.95
7.50-20	5.15	3.75
8.25-20	6.75	4.95

HEAVY DUTY TRUCK TIRES

Size	Tires	Tubes
30x5	$3.50	$1.95
32x6	6.95	2.75
34x7	8.95	3.25
38x7	9.45	3.95
36x8	9.65	3.95
40x8	11.60	4.15

ALL OTHER SIZES

DEALERS WANTED

EVERY TIRE GUARANTEED

Our **Guarantee Bond** agrees to replace at ½ price tires failing to give full 9 months' service. Replacements f. o. b. Chicago.

Don't Delay—Order Today

SEND ONLY $1.00 DEPOSIT on each tire ordered. ($3.00 on each Truck Tire.) We ship balance C. O. D. Deduct **5 per cent** if cash is sent in full with order. To fill order promptly we may substitute brands if necessary. ALL TUBES BRAND NEW—GUARANTEED—

PERRY-FIELD TIRE & RUBBER CO.
2328-30 S. Michigan Ave., Dept. AC-13, Chicago

Lemon Juice Recipe Checks Rheumatic Pain Quickly

If you suffer from rheumatic or neuritis pain, try this simple inexpensive home recipe. Get a package of Ru-Ex Compound, a two week's supply, mix it with a quart of water, add the juice of 4 lemons. Often within 48 hours —sometimes overnight—splendid results are obtained. If the pains do not quickly leave you, return the empty package and Ru-Ex will cost you nothing to try. It is sold under an absolute money-back guarantee. Ru-Ex Compound is for sale by drug stores everywhere.

Cleans Cars NEW WAY!

AGENTS! Hot Seller!

REVOLUTIONARY chemical sponge cleans cars like magic! Banishes auto-washing drudgery. Cleans linoleum, woodwork, windows like a flash! Auto owners, housewives wild about it. *Agents making phenomenal profits!* SAMPLE OFFER—Samples sent ON TRIAL to first person in each locality who writes. No obligation. Get details. *Be first—send your name TODAY!* THE KRISTEE CO., 1455 Bar Street, Akron, Ohio

INVENTORS

Delays are dangerous—Secure patent protection now. Get new FREE copyrighted booklet, "How to Protect Your Invention." No charge for preliminary information. McMORROW AND BERMAN, Registered Patent Attorneys, 178-B Barrister Building, Washington, D. C.

$7.95 60 DAYS TRIAL

FALSE TEETH

AS LOW AS $7.95

Per Plate. Dental plates are made in our own laboratory from your personal impression. WORKMANSHIP and Material **GUARANTEED** or PURCHASE PRICE REFUNDED. We take this risk on our 60-Day Trial Offer.

DO NOT SEND ANY MONEY Mail post card for **FREE** material and catalog of our LOW PRICES. DON'T PUT IT OFF—Write us today!

BRIGHTON-THOMAS DENTAL LABORATORY (INC.)
DEPT. 522 6217 S. HALSTED STREET, CHICAGO, ILL.

SAVE UP TO 50%

30 DAYS TRIAL **15-TUBE MIDWEST RADIO**

FACTORY-TO-YOU

PUT THIS CHASSIS IN YOUR PRESENT CABINET

PUSH-BUTTON TUNING

FOREIGN RECEPTION DIRECT

*Liberal trade-in allowance on many new models shown in FREE catalog—from 6 to 18 tubes—up to 5 bands—including automatic record-changing radio phonos . . . Home Recorder, etc) (User-Agents Wanted)

UP TO $25.00 TRADE-IN ALLOWANCE*

ONLY $19.95 COMPLETE CHASSIS WITH TUBES AND SPEAKER

EASY TERMS

MIDWEST RADIO CORPORATION
DEPT. 16-FF CINCINNATI, OHIO

SONG & POEM WRITERS

have you a song, poem or just a lyric? WE SUPPLY THE MELODY and make recordings of your original songs. Write for details now!

CINEMA SONG COMPANY
8440 Sunset Boulevard, Dept. A-34, Los Angeles, Calif.

TOMBSTONES

Direct to YOU $7.50 UP Easy Terms

● Genuine beautiful ROCKDALE Monuments, Markers. Satisfaction or Money Back. Free lettering. Free catalog. Freight paid. Compare our prices.

ROCKDALE MONUMENT CO.
Dept. 336 Joliet, Ill.

5 • COMPLETE NOVELS • 5

In the February issue of

LONE WOLF DETECTIVE

THE BODY IN DRAWER 13
By W. T. BALLARD

CRIMSON CARGO
By H. Q. MASUR

THE BLACK-GOLD DEMON
By RONALD FLAGG

FLAMING ALIBI
By PAUL ADAMS

SKELETON AT THE FEAST
By GRANT MASON

Now on sale at all newsstands

SPARE TIME TRAINING
THAT LEADS TO BIGGER PAY

Do you want a better position and a higher salary? You can have them if you can do the work. LaSalle experts will show you how, guide you step by step to success and help solve your personal business problems through the time-saving LaSalle Problem Method. Our salary-increasing plan enables you to prepare during your spare hours, without interference with your present duties. Simply mark on the coupon the field in which you desire success, and we will mail you a valuable book describing the opportunities in that field, together with an outline of our training. Also copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One." There is no cost or obligation. Find out how our unusual training plan has started many average men and women on the high road to success and financial independence. Check and mail the coupon NOW.

LASALLE EXTENSION UNIVERSITY, Dept. 349-R CHICAGO
A Correspondence Institution

Tell me about your salary-increasing plan for my advancement in the business field checked. Send also copy of "Ten Years' Promotion in One," all without obligation.

- ☐ Business Management
- ☐ Modern Salesmanship
- ☐ Higher Accountancy
- ☐ Traffic Management
- ☐ Law—Degree of LL.B.
- ☐ Commercial Law
- ☐ Industrial Management
- ☐ Modern Business Correspondence
- ☐ Modern Foremanship
- ☐ Expert Bookkeeping
- ☐ Business English
- ☐ Stenotypy
- ☐ C. P. A. Coaching
- ☐ Effective Speaking
- ☐ Credit and Collection Correspondence

Name..... Present Position.....

Address..... Age.....

"With God All Things Are Possible!" Are you facing difficult problems? Poor Health? Money Troubles? Obstacles? Unhappiness of any kind? If you are, and if you believe in the POWER OF PRAYER, we invite you to clip this Message now and mail with 3c stamp for full information about the remarkable work our Group is doing—and may do for you!
LIFE-STUDY FELLOWSHIP, BOX 1203, NOROTON, CONN.

THE TRUTH ABOUT
Stomach Ulcers
Caused By Gastric Hyperacidity

FREE Booklet on simple home treatment. Hundreds report they were saved from expensive operations. Learn all about this amazing inexpensive home treatment. Pain relieved from the start. No rigid or liquid diet. This valuable booklet sent FREE with information as to guaranteed trial offer. TWIN CITY VON CO., Dept. 206, Minneapolis, Minnesota.

USED Correspondence Courses
Complete home-study courses and educational books, slightly used. Sold, rented, exchanged. All subjects. Money-back guarantee. Cash paid for used courses. Full details and illustrated 72-page bargain catalog FREE. Write today!
NELSON COMPANY
500 Sherman, Dept. C-255, Chicago

Free for Asthma During Winter

IF you suffer with those terrible attacks of Asthma when it is cold and damp; if raw, Wintry winds make you choke as if each gasp for breath was the very last; if restful sleep is impossible because of the struggle to breathe; if you feel the disease is slowly wearing your life away, don't fail to send at once to the Frontier Asthma Co. for a free trial of a remarkable method. No matter where you live or whether you have any faith in any remedy under the Sun, send for this free trial. If you have suffered for a lifetime and tried everything you could learn of without relief; even if you are utterly discouraged, do not abandon hope but send today for this free trial. It will cost you nothing. Address
Frontier Asthma Co. 39-H Frontier Bldg.
462 Niagara St. Buffalo, N. Y.

MEN Buy Wholesale and Sell Drug Sundries, Razor Blades, Tooth Paste, Shaving Cream, Personal Needs, etc. Send for our FREE Complete Catalogue.
KEYSTONE CO.
72 Fifth Ave., Dept. FA3, New York, N. Y.

AIR CONDITIONED KUSHIONTRED SHOES!
EARN BIG COMMISSIONS AND
YOUR OWN SHOES AS BONUS
Steady income all year showing outstanding new Spring line—Men's, Women's, Children's Shoes. Over 200 styles include famous Cushion Sole shoes and amazing GROFLEX shoes that need no breaking in. Amazing values, fully guaranteed. Big cash commissions, liberal Bonus plan. No experience needed. Actual shoe samples without cost. Write TODAY for full information, money-making plan and FREE selling kit.
TANNERS SHOE CO., 100 Boston, Mass.
WRITE FOR FREE OUTFIT

MUSIC COMPOSED TO POEMS WANTED — any subject. Phonograph records made. Rhyming Pamphlet on request. Send Poem for consideration. Dept. 50,
KEENAN'S MUSIC SERVICE, Box 2140, Bridgeport, Conn.

WORK FOR ★UNCLE SAM★
START
$1260 to $2100 Year
PREPARE NOW FOR 1941 EXAMINATIONS
Men—Women
Mail Coupon today sure.

COUPON
FRANKLIN INSTITUTE, Dept. N232, Rochester, N. Y.
Sirs: Rush to me without charge (1) 32-page book with list of U. S. Government Big Paid jobs. (2) Tell me immediately how to qualify for one of these jobs.
Address .....
Name .....

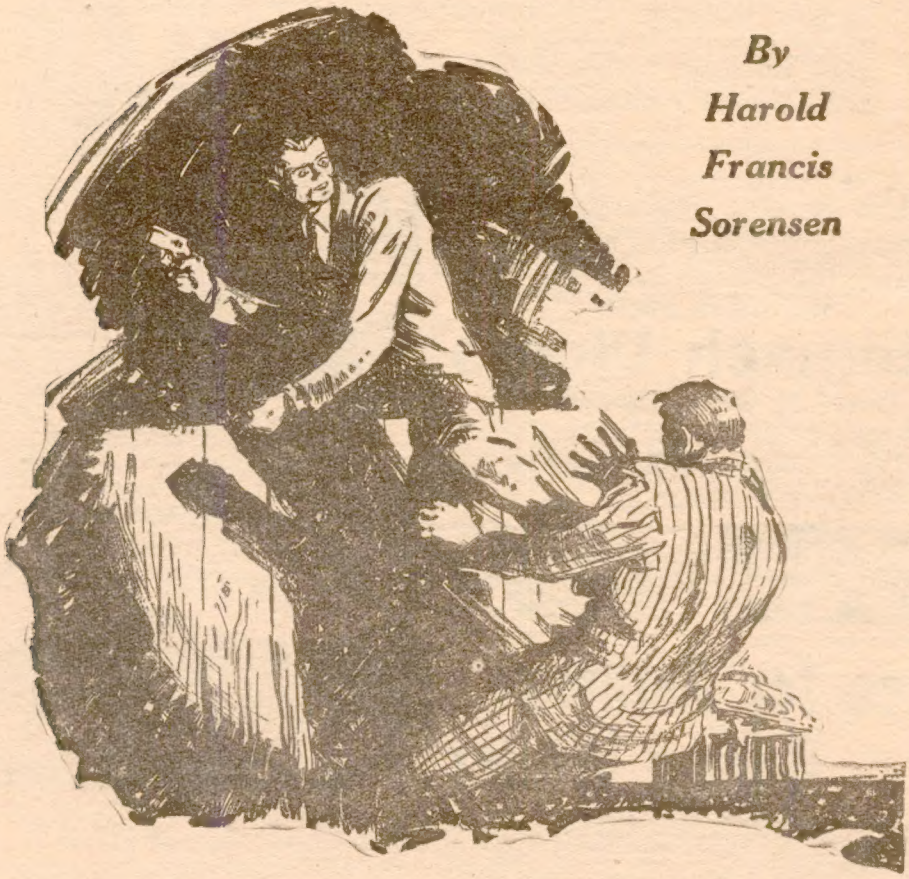
GOITRE NOT A DISEASE

Milwaukee, Wis.-It has been brought to light by scientific research that goitre is not a disease and is not to be treated as such. Dr. A. A. Rock, a prominent goitre specialist for over 30 years perfected a different method of treatment which has proven highly successful. He opposed needless operations. Dr. A. A. Rock Products have published a copyrighted book at their own expense which tells about goitre and this treatment and will send this book free to anyone interested. Write today to Dr. A. A. Rock Products, Dept. 1565, Box 737, Milwaukee, Wis.

Bullets on Blue Monday

Mystery Novelette

By Harold Francis Sorensen



CHAPTER I

KNOCKING out his pipe, McKenna put on his hat. It had been hard to wait, but he had a feeling that no businessman liked to be bothered too early, especially on Monday. Besides, the only time he had seen Tiere, the man had not looked like an early riser.

Unused to the city, McKenna made certain his big leather suitcase was locked. Then he left his hotel room, and was out in the street a minute later. After he took another look at the envelope with Tiere's address in the corner, he walked along, watching the street signs.

It was a cold, bright morning, with the sun shining. Directly overhead the sky was clear blue, though a bank of dark clouds was well above the horizon.

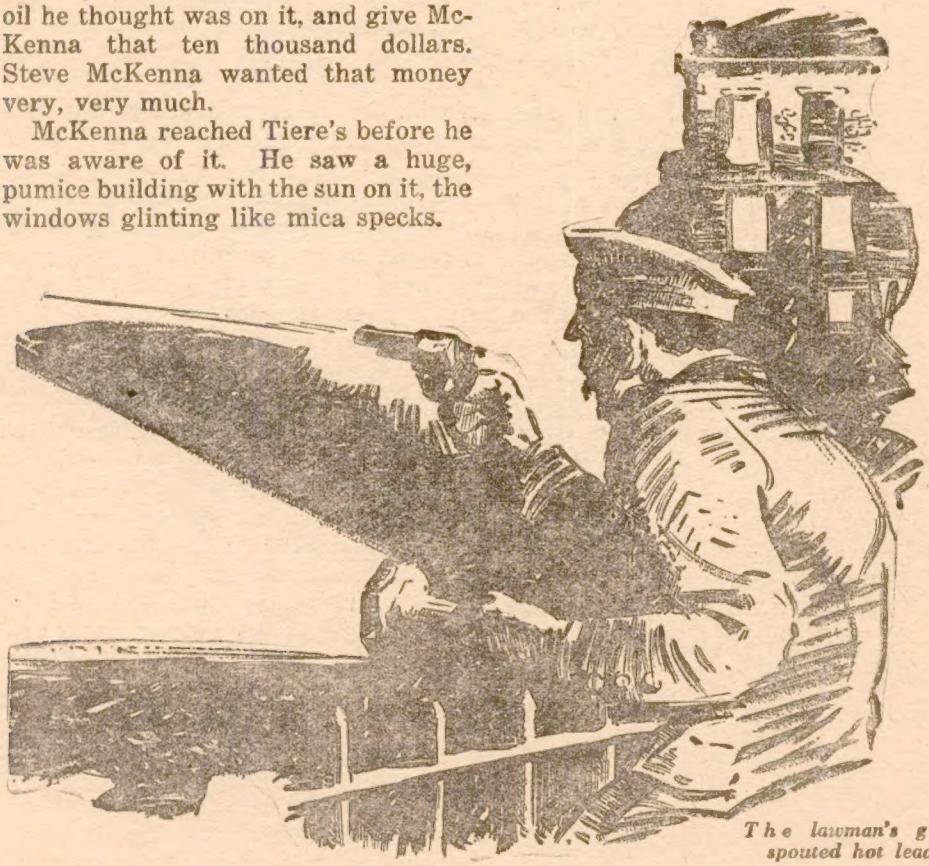
McKenna was nervous. A big, sparely built man, he was dressed in a simple blue serge suit. Other people were wearing overcoats, but he felt no need for one. All his thirty-three years, he'd been on the farm. The last thirteen years, since his parents had died, he had been alone. No, he

All his life Steve McKenna had been shadowed by a jinx. But now his persistent nemesis had caught up with him. For, in one day, he became a corpse bodyguard—hell-bent for the morgue.

didn't mind the weather, for hard work had toughened him.

But he was afraid that Tiere might not take up that option. Tiere might not buy the farm for the sake of the oil he thought was on it, and give McKenna that ten thousand dollars. Steve McKenna wanted that money very, very much.

McKenna reached Tiere's before he was aware of it. He saw a huge, pumice building with the sun on it, the windows glinting like mica specks.



The lawman's gun spouted hot lead.

Some distance short of a sharp turn in the corridor on the tenth floor, McKenna paused outside a door bearing Robert Tiere's name, and the rather scant information: DEVELOPMENTS. Down in the corner of the ground glass, in smaller letters, was the word: Exploitation. McKenna went in.

The girl had just sat down at her typewriter with a paper cup of water. She lowered the cup below the level of her desk, and smiled.

McKENNA liked the smile on her wide, soft mouth, and he ripped his hat off. She had soft, warm brown hair, and large gray eyes. Her figure was good, substantial, nothing fragile or sickly about her. He sensed at once her gaiety, deep down, like the bubbling infeed to a spring.

McKenna recollected himself, and with a wave of his calloused hand, cleared invisible webs away. He gave his name.

"Mr. Tiere is expecting you." Her mouth went wide, as if she had some suspicions of what he'd been thinking, and was keeping a smile from her lips. "He told me to send you right in."

McKenna walked in front of her desk, twisted the brass knob of the door she had indicated, and stepped into the next office.

He dropped his hat. From the thwacks of his feet coming down on the floor, he thought he must have jumped a foot high. Fascinated, he went to the dead man at the desk. It was Tiere, dapper, black haired, small of stature. The only change in him was the big knife handle sticking out the side of his neck.

McKenna wiped his hands down his trousers, and glanced at the partly open door nearly behind Tiere's desk. He sprang to it, and rushed out into the corridor.

The door was round the sharp turn in the corridor from the one by which he had entered the outer office. The corridor came to a dead end here, with just a wire-glass, closed window. Lunging, McKenna dashed round the turn. There was not a sound, except the click of typewriters somewhere. No one was in sight. McKenna raced to the first door, and burst in on the girl again.

He gestured towards the door by which she had sent him into Tiere.

The girl took one look in at Tiere, then slammed the door with a violence that drowned her scream. She inched round her desk, afraid of Steve McKenna now. With a sudden swoop, she grabbed the phone, and shouted, "Police!" into it.

They stood there after that. McKenna retreated, and stood as far from her as he could. She huddled in the corner. There was only her desk between them.

Once, a cloud passed over the sun. The room became bleak and very lonely. It was as if the world had retreated far, far from the two standing there. Belatedly, McKenna got his pipe out and stuck it between his teeth, with some vague hope thus of looking harmless.

The two policemen who dashed into the office apparently thought him the killer, the moment they'd seen Tiere's body. They rather manhandled him, slammed him against the wall. McKenna saw a new expression in the girl's gray eyes. She was no longer afraid. On the contrary, she was beginning to wonder if she shouldn't feel sorry for him.

While one policeman kept a pistol trained on McKenna, the other phoned a report on the murder.

The four of them were standing rigid when the door opened, and a blond, slight man sailed in. He took one look, turned on his heel and started out so fast that he nearly made it. Growling, the bigger policeman dragged him back. The blond man shouted that he was Harvey Logan, that he had an appointment with Tiere. He looked to the girl for confirmation, calling her Miss Dunbar.

The girl nodded numbly, but the cops put Logan in a chair some distance from McKenna, and watched him closely.

Nearly all the men who came in thereafter, and there were many, were in ordinary clothes. McKenna realized they were detectives. They took all sorts of things into Tiere's office, cameras, black cases that seemed to be heavy, a stretcher, then a basket. During it all, one tall, freckle-faced, straggly mustached man called Captain Pearson asked a lot of questions, and answered none.

PEARSON was about to begin on Steve McKenna when a policeman brought in a well-dressed, haughty man. The gentleman, that was how McKenna thought of him, identified himself as James Nisbet, and said he had an appointment for

this time with Robert Tiere. He took the news of Tiere's murder with the polite lifting of an eyebrow.

Nisbet seemed well acquainted with the slight, blond Harvey Logan, and with Tiere's secretary, Betty Dunbar. He said he operated an investment consul's office. Captain Pearson didn't understand that any better than McKenna did. Nisbet elucidated to the extent of explaining that he guided the stock and bond transactions of certain persons, his clients, for a fee.

Logan said he owned a small tea and spice importing company.

McKenna was the storm center of Captain Pearson's attack. He hotly resented this, but had the common sense to realize that Pearson had reason to suspect him.

"Tiere told me he thought there was oil on my land," McKenna told Pearson. "Tiere gave me five hundred dollars for an option. It was mine if he didn't buy the farm. If he did buy, I was to get the rest of the ten thousand dollars today."

Pearson examined him with hard bright eyes. Turning away, Pearson grilled James Nisbet, then Harvey Logan. Both admitted that their business with Tiere had been to decide if they ought to go in with Tiere on buying Steve McKenna's land. Tiere had told them to come this morning, and get a look at McKenna.

"I don't see what a look at me would have to do with oil on my land," McKenna blurted.

Captain Pearson nearly broke into a smile at that.

"Miss Dunbar," Pearson demanded, "what do you know about this? Why should Tiere have asked others in, if there was money to be made? Couldn't he buy McKenna out himself?"

"Mr. Tiere was usually in so many things all at once that he couldn't finance anything alone. At least he never did," the girl explained.

"Anyone else supposed to be here this morning?"

Betty Dunbar considered for a moment. It was Harvey Logan who spoke up quickly and declared that Wesley Allen should also be there. Betty Dunbar nodded confirmation. Pearson told her to get Allen on the phone. Miss Dunbar obliged.

"His office says Mr. Allen is at home with a bad cold today," she informed Captain Pearson.

"Get his home number, and phone him there."

McKenna watched the play of light and shadow on Betty Dunbar's rosy-cheeked face while she did. She was beautiful. He wished he could look into her gray eyes, without having her catch him at it all the time.

Wesley answered the phone, from bed. Captain Pearson nodded.

"Just make an excuse and hang up. We'll get round to him, and tell him what he needs to know."

Pearson signaled a burly man in a dirty brown suit. And before McKenna knew it, one loop of handcuffs was snapped about his right wrist.

Captain Pearson stared down at Betty Dunbar, his freckled face heavy with a scowl. "Miss Dunbar, I thought it was a secretary's job to announce a person, not just tell him to walk in on her boss?"

"Mr. Tiere had been out here only three minutes before Mr. McKenna came. He told me to send Mr. McKenna in immediately he arrived."

Captain Pearson grunted again, and caught sight of McKenna. "Get him out of here," Pearson bawled at the detective.

CHAPTER II

MCKENNA was taken down to a big black automobile and driven with a speed for which he could see no excuse, to a gray, grim police building. They asked him some perfunctory questions, and a uniformed man with chevrons wrote the facts in a big book.

They hauled him into another room, unlocked the handcuffs, and made him strip while they searched him. They weighed and measured him. The mo-

ment he was dressed, they had him press his fingers on an inkpad, then on shiny cardboard, getting the print of each finger into a particular box. They took his picture, too, two poses.

McKenna tried to answer the simultaneous and contradictory questions of five men, while they circled a chair in which they forced him to sit. If he so much as changed the position of his hand on the chair arm, they became nasty. They were angriest when he blinked his eyes.

He lost all sense of time, even the sense of the words he heard and uttered. The big light over the chair was snapped off, and smaller ones turned on. He was startled to discover that Captain Pearson was now in the room. McKenna's eyes felt burned out. They took him to another room, left him.

Eventually, he was beckoned out, and taken to a duplicate room, except that the window was larger. There were several chairs, and a desk with Captain Pearson sitting behind it. Pearson ordered him to sit down.

"We've checked on you. You're all you said you were, a farmer who let his place go to the devil. You were at the last gasp when Tiere came along. The oil would have been your salvation." Pearson cleared his throat. "Anyway, you weren't in Tiere's office long enough to have had an argument with him."

McKenna took a deep breath, and involuntarily his body stiffened. He was as big as Pearson, and stronger, younger.

"What the hell's the matter with you?" Pearson asked him.

"You still think I did it."

Pearson massaged a freckled fist. "Don't get any ideas about socking me, you big mutt. You got a bad temper—you're dynamite underneath that cold look of yours. If I had so much as a suspicion you could have argued with Tiere— Tiere was murdered with a ten-cent store kitchen knife for sale only in this city.

"You arrived last night, which was Sunday, and the stores were closed. We know where you went this morning, or we can account for your time anyway, and we know you didn't get one of those knives. Get out of here."

McKenna started to go, when Pearson roared again.

"McKenna! If you were Tiere's shill, you better tell it now, before we find it out for ourselves."

McKenna turned slowly on his heel, and gave Pearson a black look. He hated Pearson and the detectives. They'd made him feel like a heifer, dragged to market, hauled into the slaughter house. And now they didn't even apologize!

"I was not Tiere's shill! Maybe there's oil on my land—maybe not. If you think I was stooging for Tiere to cheat Nisbet, Logan and this Allen out of their money, you're studying wrong."

Pearson slid out to the edge of his chair. "Big boy, aren't you forgetting you're supposed to be a farmer? Where'd you hear of shill and stooge, and all that stuff? Caught on pretty quick about what I was hinting at, too, didn't you?"

"I traveled one season with a carnival, as mechanic," McKenna answered. "And I didn't figure that a city captain of police would be the one to think a man's just naturally dumb because he's a farmer."

Pearson reddened, gestured him to get out, and muttered something about Blue Mondays.

McKenna got out. He hired a taxi because he had no idea how to find his hotel.

UP in his hotel room, he sat by the window, smoking his pipe. Captain Pearson had said: "You're a farmer who let his place go to the devil." Oh, there was some truth in that. What there had been in his father and his grandfather, there was none of in him. The love of the land wasn't in him. His life was snared in the gears of machinery as tight as a

loose sleeve caught between rotating cogs.

His father had sent him to an agricultural college, and Steve McKenna had spent his time in machine shops, garages, the depths of lake steamers, and reading books on Diesel engines. One whole summer, he'd traveled with the carnival he'd told Pearson about. He'd worked almost for no money, for the sake of having a free hand with its machinery. Some men have to feed a hungry animal. He had to try to do something for a piece of ailing machinery.

Could he help it that he'd been chained for thirteen years, since his parents had died, to acres of scrubby land? Everything would have been all right, with that ten thousand dollars Tiere had promised him. McKenna could have set himself up in business, and used his spare time to perfect and patent several devices that he'd labored on for years.

Well, what now? He hadn't the money to hang about the city long. Tiere had given him five hundred dollars. But that had been weeks ago, and McKenna had spent most of it for machinery and materials for his workshop in the barn. What now? Go home?

He pressed his fists against his heavy cheekbones in silent anguish. He was astounded, shocked, to discover he was thinking of gray-eyed, brown-haired Betty Dunbar. McKenna sprang to his feet, indignant. Why she thought he had murdered Tiere!

He brought up with the start of a farmer knocking his hip against a stalled plow. What had happened to her? Captain Pearson had been asking her suspicious questions. She could have killed Tiere. The way she had sent him in to Tiere.

He would not let himself think it of her.

Out of the tumult, one idea emerged with sudden clarity. Tiere had been trying to get Harvey Logan and James Nisbet to put money into his land. Why couldn't *he* get those two, and that other fellow, Allen, to buy?

While McKenna buttoned his vest, he cooled. Tiere had been murdered, and just when the purchase of his farm was at hand. Tiere's murder could be connected with the possibility of oil on his farm. McKenna wanted nothing to do with Harvey Logan nor James Nisbet. It was crazy to feel that way, as crazy as the police thinking he had killed Tiere. But that was how he felt.

But this other fellow, who had been home with a cold, this Wesley Allen—he could go to Allen.

McKenna pulled on his hat and went downstairs. He easily located Allen in the phone book. Wesley Allen's voice sounded queer because of his cold, but he invited McKenna to come on up to the house. McKenna paused only long enough to learn from the desk clerk what train to take, and went there. It took him about half an hour.

The air was as cold as water from the well, now, and though it was only early afternoon, the sky was thick with heavy gray-black clouds. It would snow, but not much before midnight, McKenna thought. The wind came in sharply cold, little gusts, that seemed to be skipping along the streets.

Wesley Allen let him into the house, a two-story frame building, but right cozy. The hall was colder than the streets, but Allen led into a parlor, holding the door open till McKenna was in out of the hall. When Allen let go of the door, it swung quietly shut.

ALLEN had a roaring fire in the parlor. Beside the big chair in which Allen plumped himself, there was a small table containing medicines, halves of lemons, and a bottle of Scotch. A kettle hung in the fireplace, steaming industriously. Allen sneezed five times in five seconds, threw paper handkerchiefs into a wastebasket.

He was a rosy little man, and every so often his bright eyes jerked to

Steve McKenna. They held a smile of apology in them, as if Allen felt that he was not the sort of man who ought to have a cold, and was ashamed of it. McKenna judged him to be a thoughtful man, though probably jerky and snatching in his thinking. And sort of cynical, because he was proud of his mentality. From the shelves and shelves of books, it looked as if Allen did a lot of reading.

"Sit down. Have a drink?" Allen sneezed again. "Oh, this damned cold. Too bad about Tiere's murder. A sharp little fellow, but nothing mean about him. What do you think about the murder?"

McKenna was taken aback.

"Oh!" Allen seemed astonished that McKenna had not concocted and discarded at least a dozen theories by this time. "Well, I have my ideas. You're going to hear them in a few minutes, and so is Harvey Logan. I asked him to come. I wanted Jim Nisbet, too, but I couldn't locate him. You wait till Logan gets here, McKenna, I think we can dope this out."

Allen seemed to think he would try to force the idea out of him before Logan could arrive. And McKenna didn't want to say anything that would sound as if he were trying to make Allen tell it ahead of time. That wouldn't be polite.

McKenna said uncomfortably: "Mr. Allen, would you buy my farm the same as Tiere intended to?"

Allen pinched the lower lip of a small mouth, his shiny blue eyes regarding his visitor thoughtfully. Whatever Allen was about to say, Steve McKenna never heard, for the house-bell pealed just then.

"You stay where you are." Allen threw the rug off his legs and got up. "I'll take care of it."

He opened the door wide and went down the hall. The panel swung shut, as Allen was fumbling with the front door lock.

The kettle sang a low, shrill song. McKenna leaned one crooked arm on the high mantel, looking into the flames, not feeling like himself at all. The murder this morning—that didn't seem part of his life. He was being forced to live a life that he didn't understand.

McKenna jerked erect as he thought he heard a noise in the hall. It was not repeated, and McKenna was about to relax against the fireplace, when he decided that Wesley Allen had been gone a long time, just to answer the door.

He strode out into the hall. He was beginning to discern objects when the parlor door swung shut, and left him in the hall's almost total darkness. He punched the door open, turned on a floorlamp, pulled it out the length of its wire.

Slapping a hand over his mouth, McKenna tiptoed to the front of the hall.

But noise would never again mean anything to stout little Wesley Allen. Whoever had been outside must have struck as soon as Allen had opened up, for the fat man had slid down the frame, closing the door as he slumped. He was flat on his face, with his head pressed against the door. Out of his throat stuck the haft of a knife, exactly like the haft that had stuck out of Tiere's neck that morning.

CHAPTER III

McKENNA ran into the parlor, and took a quick dose straight out of Allen's bottle. He threw wood and small coal on the fire, and swung the kettle out. He stood there thinking what a terrible, evil force had suddenly come into the lives of these persons. He must have thought about it for a couple of minutes, before he recollected and telephoned the police.

This time it was worse than it had been in Tiere's office. The police came in by the parlor window, so as not to disturb Allen's body. The method of entering didn't make Captain Pearson feel any better towards McKenna.

Very little was said to him, and when they were finished in Allen's

house, Pearson and the other detective walked out as if Steve McKenna would follow them as a matter of course. He wasn't going to, but a policeman saw to it that he did.

They didn't put him in the chair with the powerful light over his head, nor lock him alone in a small room. He sat in Pearson's office, while that distraught captain did a lot of questioning, then a great deal more silent thinking.

Captain Pearson still hadn't said anything, when they brought in Harvey Logan, who owned the small tea and spice importing company.

Captain Pearson growled: "You had an appointment with Wesley Allen at his house, Logan. Why didn't you show up?"

Logan retorted: "I was just there, and a policeman grabbed me and brought me here."

"You were damned late about getting there."

Logan glanced at McKenna as if trying to find the answer to all this in McKenna's face. Shrugging, Logan said: "I meant to get there shortly after three, but—"

"It's half past four now." Pearson scowled at McKenna. "What was the exact time Allen was murdered?"

Logan screamed: "Allen murdered!"

"Yes!" Pearson shouted. "Murdered! Allen answered the doorbell, when it should have been you there. He got one of those dime-store kitchen knives in the neck, the same as Tiere."

Logan panted, the sweat running down his face. He unbuttoned his shirt cuff, pulled coat and shirt sleeve up together, revealing a long strip of fresh plaster on his arm.

"I was down at the warehouse, when I got Wes Allen's telephone message to come to his house. I left the warehouse about three. On the way, I swerved to avoid crashing a speeding truck, hit an oil slick, and my car overturned. I was unconscious for a while. It's a deserted section, near some unused warehouses. When I was able, I walked. You can check with the druggist at Davidson and Platt Streets. He dressed my arm."

"What time?" Pearson asked, almost insultingly.

Logan flushed, but his voice was steady: "Nearly four."

"Nearly four!" Pearson mimicked. "Allen is murdered at three-twenty or so. You're missing from three to four. You could have gone to Allen's, then returned and had your accident, and made up for lost time by being 'unconscious for a while.' You could still be the killer."

Logan yelled: "And you could do better than try to fasten suspicion on known men of good repute. The killer is under your nose."

McKenna sprang out of the chair, fists doubled, and went straight at Logan. Logan didn't flinch. He balled his fist, and they lunged toward each other.

Pearson smashed them apart, and shoved Logan toward the door, ordering: "You wait outside!"

Giving McKenna baleful glare, and Captain Pearson a grunt of disdain, Logan left the office.

PEARSON lifted his swivel chair and set it down so hard the castors nearly broke off. He banged his pants into the seat, and gave McKenna a minute-long wrathful scrutiny.

"Why don't you go home?"

McKenna had his hands jammed in his pockets. He set his shoulders back, and lifted his chin, teeth locked tight.

Pearson roared: "What's this mean? Thinking maybe you'll play detective?"

Steve McKenna didn't know if he could have gotten his jaws unlocked to speak. He didn't try, just blinked slowly, once. Then he felt his jaw loosen, his mouth almost falling open.

"I wouldn't know the first thing about it."

"Well, we know a dozen things about it," Pearson groused, "and we can't get anywhere. So there's no use

you getting under our feet. Why don't you go to hell home?"

McKenna muttered: "Because it is hell! This deal with Tiere meant a lease on life. I'm no farmer. I want to open a machine shop, and work out some inventions. Allen as much as said he might buy from me. Well, he was killed. I don't know what to do."

"Get out of here," Pearson ordered gruffly, shuffling papers on his desk. "I'm warning you—leave this city."

McKenna went out. From his previous ride in the taxi, he knew the streets about well enough to find the hotel. He walked, made only one wrong turn, and got there all right.

Up in his room, he took a bath. He dressed again, changing underwear and socks. His shirt still looked clean and, having only one spare, he decided not to change. He thought of searching for a cheap restaurant. But he needed a good meal, he knew that.

Down in the hotel dining room, he had steak, mushrooms, potatoes, deep-dish apple pie with cheese, and plenty of coffee with heavy cream. He felt better. He would have sat there at the table much longer, and done some thinking, except that he could see the woman at the next table didn't like the smell of his pipe. McKenna rose apologetically, and went out to the lobby.

Why didn't he go home? He didn't want to, the same as he'd told Captain Pearson. But why didn't he consider what he had to do? All his life his actions had been based on what he had to do, and not on what he wanted to do.

Of course Harvey Logan and James Nisbet might buy his property. Harvey Logan? Logan thought *he* was the murderer.

James Nisbet? McKenna didn't like to approach him. Nisbet had said he owned an investment counsel service, and Nisbet's manner was adapted to dealing with wealthy people. McKenna knew he wouldn't feel comfortable in Nisbet's presence. He wouldn't know how to deal with a man like Nisbet.

Maybe he ought to go home.

Every time he thought of that, pain stabbed him. He was in love with Betty Dunbar. That was the reason for his dogged determination to stay here. She meant more than his ambitions, more than whether or not he would have to farm.

Halfheartedly, he crossed the hotel lobby and looked in the phone book, just to see her name. The address glowed in his mind like one of those colorful signs that gleamed from every vantage point in the city. Before he was conscious what he was doing, he was on his way to her house. But he did know that he hadn't dared phone her first, for fear she would tell him not to come.

DIRTY white clouds jerked along against the black sky, as if pulled by wires, and disappeared over the roof of the squarely built, medium-size apartment house. The street door was open. After seeing the Dunbar apartment number near the bells, McKenna walked to the rear of the bottom hall, and pushed the white button flush with the doorframe.

Betty Dunbar opened the door, gasped, "Oh!" and recoiled.

He said nothing, he was too hurt.

"Come in." She sounded frightened, but opened the door wide. "Mother's to the movies, but she'll be back soon."

McKenna went in. He sat down in a big, upholstered chair, when she told him to.

Somehow he couldn't talk about the murders, and he couldn't bring himself to the subject of his business because that would be too suggestive of the killings. He told her about his life, how much he disliked the lonely days and nights on the farm, how the land was mean to him because he had no love for it.

Steve McKenna was fascinating to sincere, simple women. He liked girls. Home, his steady, forthright nature had attracted some, but his slowness

had lost them for him. Discontented with his lot, he'd never had the courage to invite a woman to share it. The girls married others quicker to speak, and more pleased with what they had to offer a wife.

He discovered that Betty Dunbar was calling him Steve, and he blushed hotly when the word "Betty" slipped from his lips. To judge from her smile it was not the first time he had called her that.

She rose, and asked: "Do you like tea, Steve?"

He shook his head. "Coffee's my drink."

"I'll make coffee then. Mother will like a cup, too."

"I didn't mean that!" McKenna jumped up. "I didn't—"

"Relax, Steve." She smiled widely, and her gray eyes danced. "Smoke your pipe, while I get that coffee started."

McKenna watched till she disappeared into the kitchen. He filled his pipe. A fine mess! In love with this girl, and his life a jumble. He didn't know the tomorrow of his existence. If he stayed in the city, Captain Pearson would get more and more suspicious of him. In fact, Pearson might make things difficult just to force him to leave. He couldn't get serious with Betty. He knew they all suspected him of murder, and if they didn't, they sure thought him a jinx.

Suddenly every light in the apartment went out! McKenna heard Betty gasp at the sudden darkness. Then she screamed!

McKenna somehow found the doorway, and lunged into the dark kitchen. He caught an arm, realized by its softness that it was hers. Something warm and sticky ran onto his fingers.

"Betty!" He yelled like a man in mortal pain.

The door to the apartment crashed under a heavy assault. McKenna clasped Betty with his left arm, held her round at his side, his right fist clenched.

A blinding light flashed into his face. A thick-voiced man ordered: "Let her go! This is the law! Take your hands off her, you filthy, murdering swine!"

The flashlight pointed upwards, illuminating the white ceiling, and casting down a soft glow which shone on a burly man holding a revolver in his right hand. McKenna vaguely remembered him from the morning. Anxiously he looked at Betty.

She was white-faced, biting her lower lip. Blood was coming from a deep cut in her left shoulder.

CHAPTER IV

DISREGARDING the detective's commands, McKenna took a clean towel from over the sink, and made a cold compress for her arm. There were more men in the apartment now, and policemen shouting at people in the hall. One detective went on past them into the room off the other side of the kitchen, flashing his light ahead of him, scaling the light off a bed to a bureau.

Captain Pearson came in, and McKenna felt all his muscles tighten when he got a glimpse of Pearson's face.

Pearson growled: "You didn't get so far this time, did you, McKenna? I don't know why I didn't put a tail on you the first time, and maybe save Allen's life." He said to Betty: "You've had a narrow escape, girl, but don't let it give you the jitters."

Betty exclaimed: "Steve didn't do it!"

Pearson stared searchingly into her face, then burst out with a contemptuous, "Pah!"

The lights came on. A policeman strode in, remarking: "Fuse blown out down the cellar, captain."

At Pearson's gesture, McKenna was manacled to a detective on either side of him. The rest of the men were staring at something on the floor. McKenna looked down and saw a big, cheap-looking kitchen knife with blood all along its edge.

Pearson shook a fist in his face. "I'll check on everyone in that hotel, and around it, before I'm finished with you! You could have sent someone out to buy those knives for you this morning. Dammit, why didn't I think of that?"

A detective climbed in the low bedroom window. He disappeared from view as he rounded the foot of a maple bed, then stepped into the kitchen, holding something in his fingers. Pearson grunted for Betty to look at it. McKenna craned forward.

Betty exclaimed: "My tweezers, captain! They were on the dresser there. Steve couldn't have— He was in the living room. He could not have got past me into—"

The tweezers were blackened, the surface pitted, as if the metal had bubbled and the bubbles burst, leaving craters. Pulling the detectives with him, McKenna squatted just inside the bedroom and regarded an outlet that showed black on the brass plate about it.

He told Pearson, "Someone jammed those tweezers into the outlet here and short-circuited the entire apartment."

"Yeah, you! You got past her and in here, and then used the tweezers and threw them out the window." Pearson glowered at the detectives. "Take him down and book him! Get him out of here!"

The two detectives carted McKenna to police headquarters again. They rushed him through some formalities, then hustled him into an office. They questioned him, but they weren't pleased with his answers. They became angry and rough, so he shut up altogether. They hadn't got anything out of him when Captain Pearson himself strode in.

Pearson talked to his two men in harsh whispers. Another man came into the office. He was well set-up, expensively dressed, and had a stiffly stubborn face. While he seemed to know there was plenty in the world to worry about, it looked as if he didn't see why he should worry himself when he had so many others to do it for him. His hair was silver, the electric light shining through it on his pink smooth scalp.

Deferentially, Pearson approached this man. The two detectives saluted and stood back. Pearson talked to him *sotto voce*, hands and face working.

The important man glanced at McKenna only once, then said: "Well, if you want to try it—" He put his hands together. "Don't come looking for sympathy afterward, Pearson." Then he walked out.

PEARSON shoved his face into McKenna's. "By hell, I'm tempted to throw you in a cell! I don't want any more of you. Get to your hotel, and don't you come out of your room again tonight! We'll take care of you in the morning. Get out!"

The detectives disgustedly hauled McKenna to his hotel room. They assured themselves there was no escape except by the door, flung him into the bed, and went out, locking the door from the outside.

McKenna got up. He was shaking, and for one of the few times in his life, he was close to being sick to his stomach. He turned cold and shook violently. It dawned fully upon him how near Betty had been to death. Only the darkness, which the attacker had had to have, to mask him, had saved her.

He could not resign himself to a night of inactivity. He tried to rest, but his body itched with tension. He paced the floor, smoking his pipe. It was ten o'clock by his watch. It must have been an hour since the detectives had locked him in.

McKenna got his small tool kit from his bag. He'd take his watch apart again and reassemble it. That always quieted his nerves.

Someone touched the door. McKenna dropped the kit into his pocket and listened. Either the man didn't have a key or he was being very clumsy with it. The door swung open, and the slight bodied, blond Harvey Logan

came in and quietly shut the door behind him.

McKenna gasped.

"You don't have to ask me, I'll tell you," Logan shut him up grimly. "I'm in love with Betty Dunbar. You dog, you—"

McKenna stepped toward him. "And she loves you?"

"*I love her,* and you tried to kill her. To see you, I took a room and hid down the corridor half an hour till the detective took a chance and sneaked away. I picked the lock, and here I am."

"What do you want?"

"I want a showdown. How long do you think you can get away with murder?" Logan was nearly berserk. "We're getting out of here." Logan produced a gun, and his mouth turned down nastily at the corners.

"You!" McKenna said it quietly, but it came out with all the breath of his body behind it. "You're the killer!"

"I ought to kill *you,* right here!" Logan cursed. "But I don't feel like doing it that way. Get out!"

McKenna got out, without even time to take his hat. The freight elevator stood at the back of the hall. Logan ran it to the bottom. They came up a flight of stone steps, at the back of the hotel, into a badly lighted alley. The air was cold, and so dry it prickled the face. There was an automobile, and Logan ordered him into it.

Briefly, McKenna hesitated. Except for the gun, he could have broken Logan in two. But Logan stayed too far away to be reached, yet close enough that a bullet could not have missed. As McKenna turned toward the car, someone shouted from the depths of the alley.

"Stop! Stop, McKenna, or I'll shoot!"

MCKENNA turned as Logan tried to shove him into the car and at the same time club him with the gun. Knocking the gun aside, McKenna struck Logan in the face, and dove down the stone steps back into the cellar.

He ran down a rabbit warren of dark and partially lighted passageways, all dusty smelling and seeming to lead nowhere. In one particularly dark alley, he tripped over a bundle of laundry or trash, and pitched against a padlocked door. Fitting together the part of a jimmy from his pocket kit, McKenna broke the lock off.

He went in, and stumbled against a ledge. His hand touched a hanging cord, and he pulled, putting on a light.

He was in an electrician's shop! Wheeling, McKenna ran to the door. He paused, turned back and grabbed up all the light wire he could find, stuffing it into his pockets. A minute later he located another door in another passageway. Drawing the bolt, he plunged out, up some steps, and found himself in the street at the corner of the building. He ran. To her house.

The door was opened by Betty, wearing a black silk robe over pajamas. She faltered for a moment at the shock of seeing McKenna, then clutched his arm and whisked him into the apartment.

"I hope your mother got home all right from the movies," he blurted in embarrassment.

"She did," Betty told him. "But there was a telephone call—her sister is dangerously ill. Mother was so upset when she heard it that I managed to keep her from learning what had happened here. I knew she would want to go to Aunt Kate." The girl paused, then asked: "Steve, what have you done? How did you escape from them?"

"First, put out the light," McKenna ordered. "Put on a small one that can't be seen from the outside."

Hesitantly, she obeyed him, first turning on a little lamp with a blue silk shade.

Deeply thoughtful, McKenna drew a large jackknife and opened the blade.

Betty gasped, covered her mouth, and cringed back against the wall, away from him. Holding the big-bladed knife in his hand, McKenna approached her.

"Betty," he said seriously, "either you know I didn't kill anybody, and didn't try to hurt anybody, and wouldn't harm a hair of your head, or you and I don't know anything about each other. Either you believe I love you, or I'm fighting for nothing."

"Yes," she said quietly, and her fears evaporated. "I believe you, Steve. But what did you do? Why did you break away from them? Steve, I would have made them believe in your innocence somehow."

"First I've got something to do. You stay quiet, and don't answer the door." McKenna turned from her.

He made a survey of the apartment. This was a ground floor apartment, the windows five feet or less from the paved courtyard outside. The living room had two windows, opening onto a walk between this house and the next, and into which anyone could look from the street. The kitchen had one window, but small and high up. The bedroom had that window the intruder had earlier found so easy of approach. It opened out into the back courtyard, was easy of access, and it was very dark back here.

McKenna took the soft leather kit from his pocket, and screwed together the jimmy again. He set it on the sill, propping the window open, then slashed the sashcords, putting the whole weight of the window on the prop. The electric iron, the only heavy thing he could find, he set atop the frame of the lower half of the window.

CHAPTER V

BETTY was waiting for him in the big room, where it was almost dark. Only the faintly blue, slightly eerie glow from the lamp relieved the darkness. McKenna opened the door, motioned her to the threshold, said:

"Stay right there where I can see you every instant." He went down the hall to the vestibule, punched her bell button, then stuck it in fast, so that it could not come out.

The bell was ringing shrilly. "For heaven's sakes," Betty cried, "shut it off! You'll have the whole house up!"

McKenna calmly locked and put the chain on the door, then went into the kitchen and pulled one wire off the bell.

He took the assorted wire from his pocket and got to work. From the connection pulled off the bell, he took a wire to the kitchen window, and fastened it. Fixing another wire with its bare end just a hairbreadth away, McKenna ran it back and fixed it to the connection on the bell. He repeated this, running wire to each of the living room windows, to the door and back to the bell. He sighed with relief and turned to the girl.

"What in the world are you doing?" Betty asked.

McKenna took her over to the window. He pressed two bare ends of scarcely parted wire together. The bell rang. He separated the wire ends.

"It's like that at these two living room windows and the kitchen window and at the door," McKenna explained slowly. "These bare wire ends take the place of the vestibule button now. See, if anyone moves the window, that bare end of wire is brought against this one, and the bell rings. If anyone picks the lock of the door, the chain will keep him out, but you'll know he's at it because the bell will ring.

"I didn't have wire enough for the bedroom window. That's the real dangerous one. So I fixed it as a deadfall. The sash cords are cut, and there's a prop holding the window up. Anyone tries to climb in, the prop will fall out, your mother's electric iron will fall. And there's a good chance the window will come down on the fellow's head."

"Well, thanks," Betty said weakly.

McKenna told her everything that

had happened since he had been taken out of here by the two detectives.

"Betty, did you know Logan loves you?"

Her face darkened in the uncertain blue light, and he thought she was blushing.

"Yes, I knew. Logan told me. There was quite some unpleasantness about it. He's terribly persistent. I told him plainly—" she shook her head—"that it was no use. He was seething, as if I'd insulted him by refusing to love him. But, Steve, you don't think he killed two men, tried to kill me, because—"

"I don't look for sense from any man that murders people," McKenna reasoned. "Maybe it would seem like a pretty smart scheme to a fellow that had murder in his heart, to kill people when I was here to get blamed. And not just to kill you, that he was aiming at, but Tiere and Allen first, so it wouldn't look like you mattered."

Her trembling hand was on his arm. "Steve, was he taking you out of the hotel to kill you?"

"Makes sense to think he was." McKenna made her sit on the couch and dropped down beside her. "Yet, I kind of wonder. Might have been something deeper on his mind, maybe—"

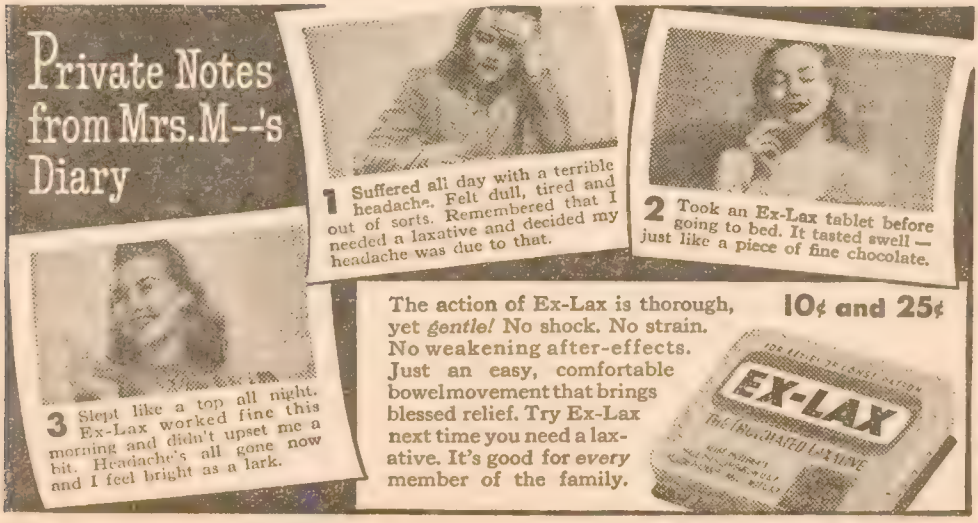
"Well, whatever!" she cried angrily. "It's the fault of the police. They had no right to expose you to that danger. They didn't protect you at all, just locked you in your room and then left you helpless."

"They didn't leave me," McKenna contradicted. "Just got careless for a minute, and Logan was too quick for them. They were watching me. I was put in that hotel for nothing but to draw the killer to me."

Betty gasped.

"THAT'S certain," McKenna nodded. "I've seen too many come-ons set out for people, not to recognize one when I'm it. Captain Pearson is a man who gets hotted up terrible when he don't get his own way, and these murders have tormented him more than he's used to bearing. He can't see anybody for these murders but me, because I'm easiest and handiest.

"Still and all, he's got good sense, and it's trying to warn him he's wrong. Pearson talked his boss into letting him put me back into the hotel room. He figured something would happen. Either I would try to get out and do more killing, or someone would get in and try to kill me."



"The beast!" she said furiously. "The unfeeling, unthinking beast! He had no right to take that chance with your life. Oh, the stupid fool! What reason could you ever have had to kill anyone?"

"Good reason." McKenna rubbed his hands on his trousers. "And if Captain Pearson hasn't thought of it yet, he's going to. And going to prove it, too. I've been thinking quite some today. What's gone on kind of makes me think my land is worth a sight more than that ten thousand Tiere was willing to give me for it."

"Well," she exclaimed, "well, of course it is. It has to be, Mr. Tiere wouldn't have given you ten thousand, and then invested ten or twenty thousand more, just to get his investment back. There had to be a profit."

"No," he argued placidly, "I don't mean it was worth five or six times what Tiere was giving. I mean it's worth thirty or forty times that ten thousand. Tiere had an option on my land. It was the same as if I didn't own it temporarily. Suppose I came to the city knowing what it was worth? Wouldn't it be just made right for the police to think I killed Tiere to cancel that option?

"Wouldn't anybody believe I maybe went to Wesley Allen and tried to sell to him for a big price? Suppose I did do that, and Allen caught wise I must have killed Tiere on account of I knew. Wouldn't I have to kill Allen then?"

"If this is true," Betty said, tremblingly, "then we are in bad, Steve. I never thought the police could find any reason why you might have murdered them. It scares me." She put a hand to her throat. "I don't know what to do to help you. I don't know enough about it all to tell you anything."

"I thought maybe you did," McKenna sighed. "I wasn't ever afraid, not even when Logan tried to force me into his car. Because I thought whoever had killed Tiere and Allen had come here and tried it on you just because I was here. And he wanted to make it look as if there was a killing wherever I was. But just when I got free of Logan, it came over me that this killer *wants* to kill you. He isn't doing it to make it look bad for me. He figures you've got to be dead."

"But why?" the girl demanded in a whisper.

"Because he thinks you know something. Maybe it isn't right on top of your mind, but he's worried that maybe you're going to remember it." McKenna took her hand in his. "Betty, can't you sort of make an effort to remember if anyone was trying to get my option away from Tiere, or anything like that?"

"I don't know!" she told him. "Ordinarily, I would. But things have been so different the past week! Mr. Tiere's been jealous and mean and suspicious. The doctor told him he had stomach ulcers and would have to undergo an operation. That frightened Mr. Tiere, worried him. He became unbearable. That's why—" her voice sank—"I told you to go into his office this morning. I couldn't bear to face him any more, he was so cranky."

"Well, I'm figuring the same as Captain Pearson." McKenna rubbed his big hands together. "I guess we'll know in a little while, unless Pearson thinks of this place first, and comes to get me."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Pearson thinks I'm killing, or going to be killed. He's not thinking of you the way I am. I know someone wants to kill you, Betty. That's why I'm here—to see he doesn't. But I've fixed this alarm system so that if Pearson takes me away, you'll still be safe. You see, if I ask Pearson to put a guard here, he'll only say that with me in prison there's nothing for you to worry about."

BETTY shivered, clasping her hands. Gradually she overcame her fear. A new note came into her voice. "I'm not afraid, Steve, not while you are here—"

From the bedroom came a cry and

a crash. The sound was interspersed with the slamming of the window and the thud of the electric iron to the floor. A human being screamed.

McKenna dashed through kitchen and into the bedroom. The window was shut down tight. Someone had tried to come in, and knocked the prop out, and the window had crashed down on him. But the killer had squirmed loose and was getting away.

The window was difficult to raise now that it had no sash cords, but McKenna flung it up, and got out on the sill. He sprang into the court-yard.

At the last moment, as his feet left the sill, he saw that there was not ground under the window, but a deep pit with steps leading down to the cellar. McKenna made a desperate effort to throw himself farther out from the building. He landed, his feet tripped over the top step, and he hit the pavement with a jar.

A shoe gritted, and McKenna rolled over, threw up his hands to defend himself. In the instant, he realized that the murderer, hurt and startled by the dangerous trap the window was, had slipped, and fallen to the bottom of those cellar steps. McKenna had jumped over him, and he was coming up behind McKenna and had that advantage.

There was little light, but McKenna saw the gleam of steel and jerked himself aside. The man grunted from the exertion of his effort. His arm came down powerfully. And the knife blade hit the pavement beside McKenna, struck sparks from the stone.

Grabbing for the man, McKenna got a fist in the face. Then the other man was up, running towards the back of the yard. McKenna dashed after him.

Like a strange, suddenly appearing sun, a light popped over the fence, and its beam fell on McKenna.

Pearson shouted in his raucous voice: "Stop! Stop!"

McKenna went faster.

Pearson's light lifted, to jerk after McKenna. But it overshot him, and revealed the man climbing the fence.

Hanging from the fence by his hands, the man turned in time to kick McKenna in the face and chest and send him sprawling. McKenna sprang up, pulled him off the fence, then was smashed in the head and sent reeling. McKenna lunged forward for another dash in, as Pearson's light spotted them again. The flash also shone on the strained desperate face of the formerly dapper and dignified James Nisbet. He had a gun in his hand.

Pearson shouted: "Get down, McKenna, you fool! Don't tackle him!"

McKENNA dropped to the ground. He had to, for Nisbet was shooting at him. Pearson fired, and Nisbet shot at Pearson. McKenna lay there, with the shots volleying above him. Suddenly the light blinked off. McKenna rushed at Nisbet.

But Nisbet was down. The light came on again, then Pearson dropped over the fence and hurried to them. McKenna propped Nisbet up against the fence.

Captain Pearson examined him quickly, whispered: "He's dying."

Pearson declared gruffly: "We have you, Nisbet. You were forced out into the open, trapped. You going to tell us everything before you die?"

Nisbet took a deep breath, his eyes conned their faces by the glow of the flashlight, and he nodded wearily. "I had no choice. I have none now. McKenna's property is worth at least a million—you can take Tiere's word for that. I hadn't the money to buy in with the rest of them. Nor would it have done any good. I had to have all of it, and I'm penniless." Pain flashed across Nisbet's face. "I've used up the funds of my investment service clients, and soon I'd have to make an accounting.

"I intended to kill the others, except Logan. I left Logan alive to share the suspicions there would naturally be. When McKenna was in prison and needed attorney's fees, I would have bought his farm—with a worthless

check. But by the time I'd given him the check, and he'd passed it to a lawyer, I would have raised money on the property, and had it in the bank."

McKenna choked: "You shouldn't have tried to kill Betty."

Nisbet grimaced. "I browbeat Tiere into transferring the option to me, gave him a song and dance, told him he was too ill to handle the deal. I thought he told Betty Dunbar about it. I couldn't take any chances on leaving her alive, because I made Tiere suspicious forcing the option from him."

Pearson bent over him, then got up slowly. "He's dead."

McKenna dusted his knees. "You get Logan?"

Pearson nodded. "He got away from the hotel, but ran his auto into a truck a few blocks farther on. Got him to the hospital, and as soon as he regained consciousness, got his story. He figured you did the killings. He was jealous about you and the girl. He wanted to take you to Nisbet, and hold a kangaroo court.

"Logan figured the police were too slow. He wanted to take the law into his own hands." Pearson cleared his throat. "McKenna, I never expected anything like this. I sent you back to your hotel room just to see if anything would happen."

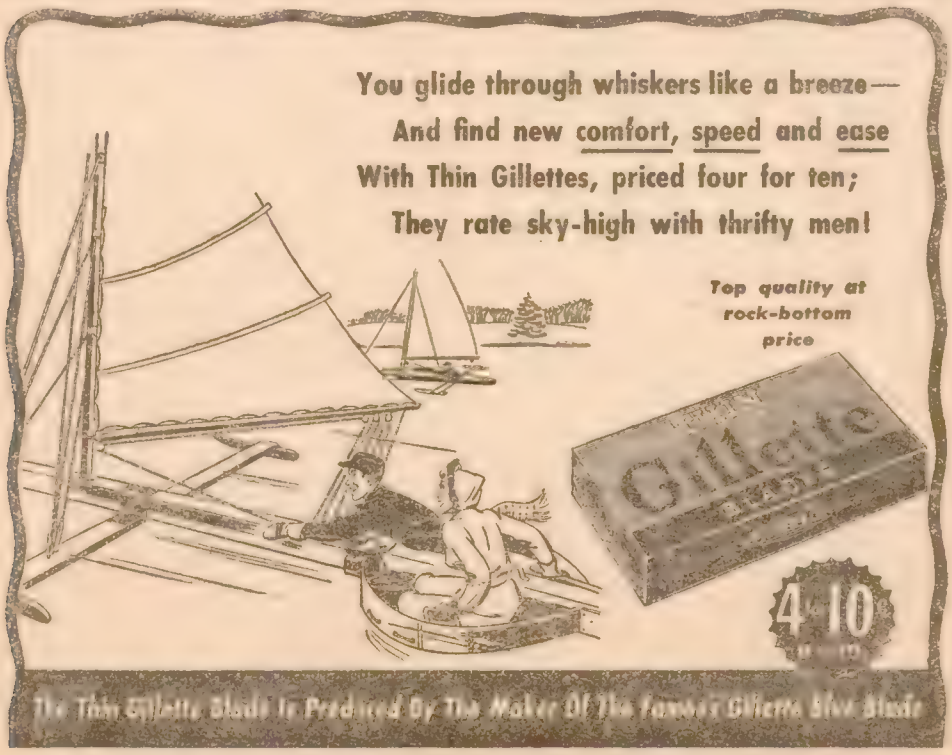
He walked back to the house. Betty was at the window. McKenna went in.

"Betty, that farm is worth a heap more than ten thousand. Enough more that it drove Nisbet to all this. And—well—you know what I told you before. You know what I said!"

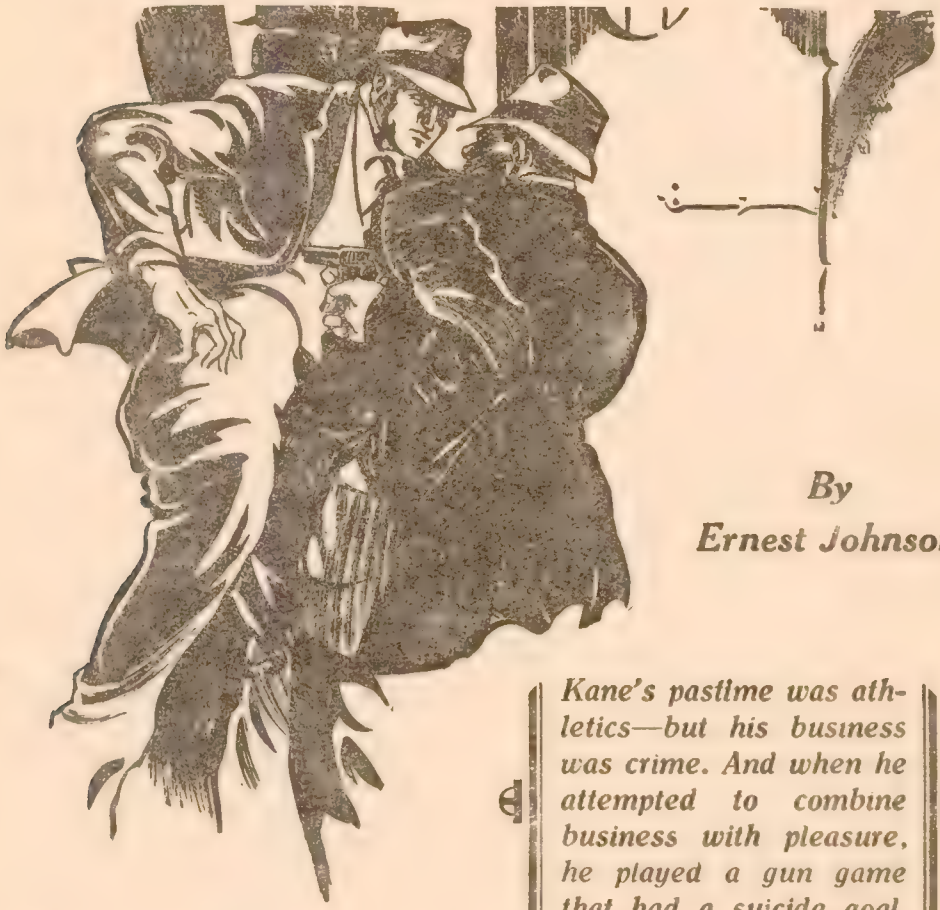
Betty stood close, looking up into his face. "You might be a good mechanic," she said, "but you don't seem to know much about girls."

McKenna blinked, then realized she was waiting to be kissed.

It was the first nice thing he had had a chance to do since he'd got to the city. Blue Monday had become a red-letter day.



Pass-Key to the Morgue



By
Ernest Johnson

Kane's pastime was athletics—but his business was crime. And when he attempted to combine business with pleasure, he played a gun game that had a suicide goal.

THE beach ball zipped across the pale green surface of the athletic club pool with rocket speed. Kane made a leaping sidewise plunge, his long arm outstretched, his hand cupped.

Immediately three members dived, came up about him, trapping him. Kane feinted, shifted swiftly to the left, whirled over and over and under, eluding his opponents. He dived the remaining length of the one hundred and twenty foot pool and emerged, cold and unsmiling, with the ball.

Kane grimaced sourly. If he felt any emotion at his prowess, it did not show in his reddish black eyes. Only the twist of his thin lips expressed the contempt he felt for the awkwardness of the others. This applied especially to the fat member who was bending forward grasping his stomach which Kane had contrived to give a vicious kick as he dived. With a sudden turn of his wrist, he sent the ball skimming to the other end of the pool, and chuckled as it struck the fat member in the mouth. The fat member, one hand grasping his stomach and the other his mouth, started for the ladder.

Kane started to swim across to the locker-room side of the pool and, as he turned and lifted his head for air, he glimpsed a pair of shiny brown shoes on the pool-rim. He rolled over on his back and his eyes traveled up the length of an immaculately trousered figure standing on the cement floor above him.

Kane said, through sneering lips: "Hello, Lawler."

Lawler was plump, pink-faced and manicured. Carefully dressed, an overcoat hanging in the crook of his left arm, he looked as if he had just come in from the street. His face was flushed and his lips were trembling as he leaned over the water toward Kane and whispered:

"Do you know what the mourning's for outside?"

Kane ran his hand over his wet, straight black hair, eyed Lawler narrowly.

"The mourning! The black drapes on the front of the club!" Lawler snapped impatiently.

Kane, annoyed, was silent for a moment. That soft, purry voice of Lawler's now pitched with excitement, rankled him. There were other things about Lawler he did not like, either—his softness, his cowardice.

"What's on your mind?" said Kane.

"You never answered my question, Kane. What are the rags for?"

"That's easy, Lawler. For Mrs. Sanford. She died unexpectedly in Honolulu two days ago. She was an honorary member of this joint. Her husband, Paul Sanford, is a grandson of one of the founders. He's a banker—plenty of dough—always has had it. Jewels, too. Fortune in 'em."

"You seem to know a lot about California's wealthy families."

Kane, the sneer still on his thin lips, said: "That's my business—knowing about rich people."

Then with a seemingly effortless motion Kane slid face foremost under water. Lawler's face suddenly grew sullen. He twitched about impatiently as he watched the swimmer make three swift turns up and down the pool under water and come up, body glistening, his broad chest rising and falling almost imperceptibly. Kane swam over to Lawler, who faded back from the edge of the pool to keep the splashing water from his shiny shoes. He liked water like a Maltese.

Pretending not to notice the other's finicky movement, Kane deftly scooped a handful of water onto the floor. Lawler jumped back—too late. He scowled silently as he shook the drops off his shoes.

Kane said: "Sanford took the boat for Honolulu yesterday. He— But what's the quiz for?"

Lawler asked, his tone filled with veiled meaning: "Do you know what that means to us?"

"No. But if you wait till I get my clothes on I'll listen while we play a game of billiards."

"Billiards!" Lawler almost shouted, scornfully. "Billiards! Swimming! Sports! Man, don't you ever think of anything else! You know my specialty's skirts. All other games bore me."

"Dames'll be the death of you yet, Lawler."

Lawler spluttered: "And you'll die fightin' bulls, ridin' race horses, or—or playin' parchesi."

Locking his hands about an iron column, Kane swung his glistening body effortlessly out of the pool. Save for little purplish, dissolute pouches under his eyes, and a slight bulge under the belt of his swimming trunks, he looked every inch an athlete.

He walked across the wet floor to the locker-room. Lawler minced along behind him, his face screwed up impatiently. Kane knew Lawler was keyed up, tense, excited about something. That was the way of these inside men, safe crackers. They didn't have the cold, steady nerve, the guts, of the gunman—like Kane. He flexed the fingers of his right hand involuntarily. Still, Lawler was an expert—could crack a can quicker than anyone else he knew. And he knew plenty. But Lawler! Yellow!

Lawler said: "Hurry into your clothes. I got hot news. Means a lot of coin to both of us." He stopped in the locker-room where it was dry, paced nervously up and down.

KANE dallied under the shower, generously soaped his lithe body. He purposely let Lawler fume in suppressed excitement. Finally he came out, got into his clothes. Out of the corner of his eye he caught a contemptuous glint of expert scrutiny in Lawler's eyes.

Lawler purred softly: "Don't you ever wear a vest? Your hair's sticking up in back; your belt's out of its loop. And in thirty-seven years you haven't learned to tie a tie. Damn good tie, too—but the design's lousy."

Kane muffed the slur. He started for the stairs to the lobby, said: "Come on, punk, we'll play some billiards."

Lawler's round face grew red, apoplectic. "Billiards! Don't be a fool!" he shouted. "I come here to tell you about something hot—and you want to play billiards. I should have got Slats and Fred instead."

Kane's black brows shot up. "Heels!"

"Yeah!" snapped Lawler. "Heels to you. You think a hell of a lot of yourself, don't you? Fred's damn bad—so's Slat's. I may need them both yet."

For a moment Kane said nothing. Then: "We'll play billiards. I can think better when I'm doing something."

They walked upstairs and across the black and white terrazzo floor of the lobby, took the elevator to the fourth floor. They found the billiard room deserted. Kane selected a cue, weighed it expertly in his fingers. Lawler picked up a stick mechanically.

Lawler began. "I—"

"Save it," snapped Kane.

Carefully, he spotted a ball on the table, stroked it gently with his cue. Lawler watched him disinterestedly; then, as if in a daze, followed suit. They played for several minutes in silence, except for the soft clicking of the ivories.

Suddenly Lawler threw down his cue, and swore. "Kane, won't you listen?"

Kane continued quietly stroking the ball. He said: "Spill it, then."

An animated light shone in Lawler's eyes. "It's about Sanford. He's got a swell joint—an English farmhouse—up in the mountains. At Lake Trantine. Spends his summers there. Didn't close it last fall. He's been going there off and on all winter—for the skating and skiing. Three weeks ago, Mrs. Sanford went on a visit to Honolulu. She intended to be gone three-four weeks. She died there unexpectedly."

He paused, wet his lips. Kane brought out a pack of cigarettes, lighted one, blew smoke through his nostrils.

Lawler said: "Sanford was here in town when he got the message from Honolulu. He left last night for Frisco to take the boat. He didn't have time to do anything about the house up at the lake. Now, I got it straight that Mrs. Sanford left some ice up there when she went away—sixty thousand dollars' worth—a diamond necklace with an emerald clasp worth about forty-five thousand, a bracelet, and some other stuff, too. And say, big boy," Lawler waxed enthusiastic, "it'll be a cinch for us to go up and lift it."

"Where'd you get the info?" Kane asked levelly.

"What's the dif, Kane? It's on the level."

Kane said: "What's the lay?"

Eagerly Lawler explained: "It's like this. The place is in charge of a guy named Quinn—an old geezer who kind of putters about, looking after things. Sanford don't keep no regular staff there. The day before he goes to the lake, he usually sends a half-dozen servants from the staff of his own town house. There won't be anybody around but old Quinn. He'll be soft

to take care of. We'll drive up there, crack the can and—"

Kane laughed, shook his head.

Lawler shouted: "What's the matter?"

"Sounds cuckoo," said Kane. "Crazy. Too easy. Must be a catch somewhere."

Lawler grinned, looked relieved. "You gave me a start for a moment. I thought you wasn't going through with it."

"I tell you it sounds cuckoo," said Kane.

LAWLER shrugged impatiently. "But it isn't, at all—once you know that Sanford dame. She's nutty. All the time taking up some new fad or other. Running about from place to place. Flighty. Head in the clouds. Nothing solid about her. She forgot all about having the ice up there. And the old man's too busy here in town to know what she's doing half the time.

"It's perfect, I tell you. Just one of those things. A cuckoo dame walks out and leaves sixty thousand dollars' worth of swag in a summer home—unprotected."

Kane, black brows knitted thoughtfully, said: "That's right, come to think of it. I remember that skirt now. She *is* nuts! We'll hop to it."

A thin grin writhed across Lawler's plump face. "I knew you'd get it, big boy. Let's get going."

Kane laid his cue on the table. They went out into the hall, took the elevator to Kane's room on the seventeenth floor. From the middle drawer of a dresser Kane took two clips of cartridges, slipped them into his pocket with his automatic.

"How're you fixed?" he asked.

Lawler patted the bulge under his armpit. "Okay. But you know I ain't no good with a gun. That ain't my racket. The way you shot up those dicks at Carter's—"

For the first time, a grin settled over Kane's somber features. "I hate dicks. And I never miss 'em." He pointed to a cabinet. "Better grab yourself a bottle of that whisky."

Lawler opened the cabinet door, selected a flask, thrust it into his pocket. Kane got an overcoat from the closet.

"I'll take this heavy one," he said. "It'll be cold at the lake."

"Cold," said Lawler. "I'll bet the snow's six feet deep there right now."

They went out into the hall, Kane locking the door behind him. They rode the elevator to the main floor. At a row of oak phone booths along the wall between the elevator shaft and the clerk's desk, Lawler halted.

He said: "Wait a moment, I want to phone."

"Go ahead."

Lawler pushed into a booth, then came out a moment later. "What's Fred's new number? I've forgotten."

"What do you want of Fred?" said Kane, his voice metallic.

"I'm calling him and Slats— Alicia, too—to go with us."

Kane's reddish black eyes glittered angrily. "Save your nickel."

"I'm going to phone Fred," said Lawler. He began going through the pages of the phone book chained to the booth.

"I told you to save your nickel."

Lawler looked up with flaring eyes. Then he turned back to the book, ran his plump, stubby finger down the column.

"I've got it," he said, and started into the booth again.

Kane swung out his hand, grasped Lawler's plump wrist, swung him about sharply. His eyes were snapping dangerously.

"No cuts, Lawler. We'll pull this job alone."

Lawler, eyes angrily agleam, jerked back. Kane held his wrist fast.

"No cuts, Lawler. We'll take it alone." There was a metallic warning in Kane's voice.

His face a sullen cloud, Lawler said reluctantly: "All right, then. No cuts. Slats and Fred are out. Alicia, too. But

they horned us in the Matear affair. We made ten grand out of that deal. Easy. I thought it—"

Kane snapped: "They didn't have the guts to pull the job by themselves. I told you they were heels."

"Yeah!" said Lawler. "Some day one of those guys'll get fed up with your guff and—"

"Aw, forget it."

The wind was whistling noisily when they pushed through the revolving door of the club into the street. Their overcoats flapped about their legs. They held their hats as they breasted the wind to the taxi stand at the nearest street intersection.

THERE was only one cab drawn up at the curb. A big eight-cylinder car. The driver, a mild-eyed little man with practically no chin, was hunched in back of the windshield, evidently trying to keep warm. There was a stubble of pink beard on his thin, chinless face. The patent-leather visor of his cap was broken.

Kane leaned over the seat, shook the little driver erect. He said:

"Lake Trantine, Bunny."

The driver's mouth droppen open, his eyes popped.

"That's seventy-five — e i g h t y miles," he gasped.

Kane pushed Lawler into the back of the car. He said to the driver: "You can make it in three hours, Bunny. If you're fast."

The driver slumped back into the seat, stalling for time. Evidently he did not like the looks of his prospective fares or the prospect of the trip.

"But I can't leave my stand that long," he yammered.

"This is an Independent, ain't it?" snapped Kane.

"Yeh."

"Okay," said Kane. "Get going. Out Sunshine Boulevard north; then cut over into the Granitetown Highway. Get it, Bunny!"

The little driver started to remonstrate further. But something in Kane's reddish black eyes and the movement of Kane's hand in his right coat pocket made the man reconsider.

He said, very reluctantly: "Get in. And my name ain't Bunny. It's Crawford."

Kane stepped into the car, and the door slammed behind him.

"I like Bunny much better," he shouted.

The driver whirled the motor, pulled the gear lever and the car melted into eastbound traffic. Two blocks up he turned left and headed due north for the highway. Kane, a lighted cigarette in his hand, leaned back against the cushion. Lawler massaged his plump chin with nervous fingers.

Kane said: "Everything set?"

Lawler pulled a flashlight from his pocket, thumbed the button several times. "It's okay. We'll be needing this later. Got one?"

"No. What the hell do I need one for?" said Kane. "Have you got the layout?"

Lawler touched his forehead with a plump forefinger. "Right here," he grinned. "The safe's on the second floor, in Mrs. Sanford's bedroom. That's in the right wing, above the living room and an enclosed porch. There's a dressing alcove at the extreme end of the room. The safe's in there."

"Good," said Kane. He threw the butt of his cigarette on the floor, took the last one from his pack, lighted it.

It was snowing when they reached Granitetown. Big dry flakes beat against the car's windshield. Kane pointed to a drugstore and Crawford pulled up at the curb in front of it. Kane got out, bought cigarettes. Two minutes later he was back in the car. Crawford swung the big machine onto the mountain highway to Beavers.

The road wound steadily upward along the rim of tremendous rock-filled canyons. Boulders and trees were covered with thick snow. Snow plows crawled up and down the mountain road, clearing it for traffic.

At Beavers, they struck the lake

trail. Then they came out high above the lake which was cupped in a long, narrow valley. The lake was long and narrow, too, rounded at both ends like a capsule.

As the frozen silver of the lake loomed before them, Kane leaned sideways, pressed his face against the side window, peered out intently. Lawler lay back against the cushion, half asleep in the drowsy warmth.

"There's sport for you," said Kane.

"Huh," said Lawler.

Kane shook his companion, said: "See, those people down there. That's sport."

Lawler, now awake, growled: "Damn you and your sport, Kane. What are they doing?"

"Skating. The lake's filled with 'em."

Lawler sneered. "Well, I guess you're an expert at skating."

Kane said: "I never was on a pair in my life. But there isn't anything like that I'm not good at."

"Skiing, too," said Lawler, idly watching a man and a girl flash down a snowy decline.

"Yeah. Anything like that."

"Okay! Okay!" said Lawler, nettled.

Crawford pushed down on the gas, the car purred around the eastern end of the lake toward the Sanford farmhouse. It was still more than an hour's drive away. By the time they reached the hilltop on which the building was situated, dark had fallen against the thick blanket of snow. Crawford swung sharply to the left under the shoulder of a crag and up to a circular drive in front of the building. The snow had been cleared from the drive—evidently by old Quinn, as if he were expecting someone.

The little chauffeur rolled the car across the drive, stopped. Drawing their coats about them, Kane and his companion sprang out. Kane said: "Keep that motor hot, Bunny. We may have to break out of here in a hurry."

Crawford did not answer, but rolled the car into the shadow of a conifer further down the drive.

The house itself was quite dark, silent. Kane and Lawler made their way softly to the back door, which Lawler opened with a passkey without any difficulty.

Kane, automatic outthrust, entered first. Lawler, close behind him, swore softly as he thumbed the button of the flashlight and it failed to go on. Without waiting, Kane proceeded cautiously into the darkness. Then the rubber heel of his shoe skidded over something wet, sticky, and he pitched forward. As he struggled to regain his balance, his foot bumped against something soft, yielding.

Lawler, still thumbing the button, growled: "What's the matter?"

Kane swore, knelt, groped along the floor. His hand touched something stiff—a shoe—the blunt rounded toe upturned. For a moment he knelt there in the silent darkness. Then he opened his fingers quickly; closed them again about the blunt shoe-cap.

"The light," he snapped.

Lawler shook the light, screwed savagely at the bottom, pressed the button again. The light flashed on, a funneling gleam boring into the darkness.

"Here, you fool!" said Kane.

LAWLER held the light's eye down, moved the wavering gleam back and forth. The beam trembled onto the body of a man, inert, prone upon the floor. Lawler gasped, and with a sudden crash the light dropped from his flabby fingers.

Kane pounced upon the light, grasped it with his left hand. In a lightning movement he straightened and heaved his balled right fist at Lawler's dark bulk. There was another crash as Lawler careened back against the door.

Kane snarled: "Don't make so damn much noise!"

Lawler now thoroughly frightened, gasped: "What's the matter?"

Kane pointed the beam to the floor again, saying: "He's dead!"

Holding his smarting jaw, Lawler wheezed, "Oh!" as if there was something in his throat difficult to swallow.

The gleam revealed a small dark mass beside the body, with a streak across it where Kane's heel had struck and skidded. There was another mass on the floor, too, just on the edge of the pool of light. The mass had an iridescent gleam. Kane reached down and felt it. It was cold and wet. He threw the stuff from him, laughed shortly.

He chuckled grimly: "He's dead. Deader than these fish. Quinn must have just come in from the lake with these fish when he was killed."

In the torch's glare the dead man's face looked broad and gaunt and lined. His hair was gray, matted.

"This is Quinn, isn't it?" Kane asked shortly.

Lawler now timorously hovering above him, considered for a moment, said: "I don't know. I never saw him. But it must be from the description I got."

Kane leaped in quick alarm. "The necklace! Has someone beat us to it?" He pushed Lawler aside roughly, started from the room.

In a queer, strained voice Lawler began: "I wonder—"

"What!" snapped Kane, stopping short.

Lawler gulped. "I said I wonder who could have done it."

Kane ran through the narrow passage to the stairway in the front hall. Together they hurried up the stairs, down the hall to the door of Mrs. Sanford's bedroom.

Behind a hanging picture in the alcove dressing room, Lawler found the safe, the door tightly closed. Evidently it had not been tampered with.

Kane said tersely: "Hop to it. Crack that can, and be damned quick about it. I'll take a look about."

Lawler lost no time in busying himself with the safe door. Kane left him there, sauntered back up the hall, looked into the other rooms. They seemed empty. He descended to the first floor, walked through the dark rooms there. No one was about. Evidently the place was quite deserted.

The cellar still remained to be inspected. The door to the cellar was in the narrow passage between the hall and the kitchen, where Quinn's body lay. Kane descended the cellar steps. Down there it was quite warm. He heard the faint purr of a motor, saw a dark, bulky object in one corner, a dull red glow issuing from it out of a narrow slot. The furnace. Evidently old Quinn had attended to it before going to the lake.

Proceeding cautiously, Kane entered what seemed to be a paneled recreation room, bumped against something sharp—the corner of a billiard table. He grasped the edge of the table, pressed his fingers into the rubber cushion. He stood thus for a moment in silence. His thin lips relaxed a little. Then he walked back to the furnace, threw open the door. A dull glow lit the gloom, suffusing the table with a soft, rose-colored light. From a rack Kane selected a cue, began clicking away intently at the ivories.

Suddenly the electric lights in the cellar flashed on with startling unexpectedness. Kane, in the act of making a shot, paused, his cue suspended, startled for the moment.

From somewhere above came the sound of hurried footsteps. Quietly, Kane laid his cue on the table, whipped out his automatic, crept up the stairs and listened. Someone was running lightly, descending the stairs from above. Kane saw him first. It was Lawler, his face pale with excitement. In his hand he held something that glittered—the Sanford necklace!

Kane said: "What happened? Why the lights?"

Lawler, quivering, gasped: "Where you been?"

Kane snapped: "Why in hell the

lights? Put 'em out! Quick! You'll have—" He sprang across the room to a wall switch, threw it over. The lights stayed on. He ran back across the hall, flung up another switch. Still, the lights did not go out.

"I didn't turn 'em on," said Lawler. "They just went on. All of 'em. Let's get the hell out of here. They'll see these lights all over the valley."

"Okay," said Kane. "Let's see the ice."

Mechanically Lawler extended his hand. Kane lifted the Sanford necklace from it. His eyes fastened greedily on the glittering stones.

Lawler, shifting nervously, said: "Come on. Step on it, Kane. Let's get going!"

SHIFTING the necklace to his right hand with his automatic, Kane started for the door. He reached for the knob, turned it. Then suddenly the door swung in without warning, crashed against Kane, flinging him back.

Behind him Kane heard the sound of thudding footsteps and knew without turning that Lawler had fled.

Two men, followed by a girl, flung themselves into the room. The men held automatics trained at Kane's middle. Kane's gun-hand jerked up.

"Steady, Kane. Don't be so damn jumpy," said the man in the lead. He was a big man with his overcoat collar drawn tightly about his throat. His face was broad, clayish yellow. His eyes were small, close-set and quite bright now as they bored into Kane.

"Hello, Fred," said Kane evenly. He held his gun trained at the man. "Why, hello, Slats—Alicia. You gave me a start. It's damn dangerous business—busting in a door like that."

Fred peered hard at the glittering necklace in Kane's hand. He said in a deadly even tone: "It's a damned sight more dangerous to double-cross a pal, Kane."

Kane laughed harshly, kept his eyes glued on the trio: "So what, fellows? You tried some crossing, yourselves. You skipped out here ahead of us and tried to pull a fast one. Bumped off old Quinn—"

"Damn him," interrupted Fred.

"Bumped off the old guy," continued Kane. "You had the jump on us. If you didn't get the ice, then it's just your tough luck."

"Yeah," Fred snarled. "Quinn fussed up the detail. Steered us to a phony plant. He got a little tough—"

"And you beat it before examining the phony stuff Quinn handed you," said Kane. He smiled grimly.

"That's about the way of it, bright boy," snapped Fred. "But what you know ain't going to help you any. You—"

Then an amazing thing happened. The lights which had been blazing brightly through the house, winked out—all of them—quite suddenly. The house was pitched in darkness. For a space of five seconds, silence. Dreadful silence.

Kane, now dangerously grim, dropped to the floor—just in time to escape a hail of lead that swept above him, that tore into the rear wall of the room. And before the racket died away, he had frantically rolled across the floor, through the open door into the next room.

Rather unconcernedly he wondered where Lawler was. He felt sure that Lawler had run out on him. The heel! But if he hadn't, and if he had failed to drop when the lights went out, then Lawler would be lying there on the floor—dead. Kane smiled. He stuffed the necklace into his coat pocket. Lawler would never share in the proceeds of this haul. Kane was sure of that.

On the floor behind the door, Kane listened for a telltale sound in the adjoining room. But there was only silence. He leveled his automatic to where he judged the front door ought to be. If they were still bunched there —Slats and Fred and Alicia—Kane squeezed a stream of lead from his

gun. Slugs leaped out into the darkness. He eased the pressure of his fingers, slipped another clip of cartridges into the magazine.

The rug in the other room—where Fred and Slats and Alicia were—was quite thick and soft, Kane now remembered. Anyone moving over it would make no sound. Then suddenly, without warning, slugs began tearing at him. They came like leaden hail. Kane could hear the whine of them as they sped by. He could hear the wood splinter as the slugs bit into the rim of the door-jamb behind which he crouched. The shots stopped.

Cautiously, soundlessly, Kane shifted his position. His thin lips twisted in a dangerous, murderous snarl. He thought now that he'd spotted someone in the right-hand corner of the living room. He pumped three swift shots there and, without hesitating, flung four shots into the opposite corner. There came a dull thud, as of a heavy body falling. But there was no other sound.

With automatic poised, Kane waited calmly, coolly. A chill current swept through the place. But he did not seem to feel it. Nor the silence, the darkness, which would have terrorized a normally sensitive person.

Then the lights flashed on again—all of them. Kane blinked several times. His eyes slid about. The big room seemed deserted, save for a huddled form in the right-hand corner—a form sprawled in an awkward sitting position on the floor, body twisted, right arm hooked over the upholstered arm of a chair. It was Fred, automatic still clutched in his hand, dead.

KANE'S thin lips twisted in a smile. He slid his eyes to the left. The front door was open. Faint crimson drops led to it. Either Alicia or Slats had been struck. But both of them had fled. And so, apparently, had Lawlor. Kane sprang to the door, peered out, in time to see the twin tail-lights of an auto speeding down the hill.

With a pantherish leap he landed in the driveway, his gun barrel trained at the fleeing car. The red tail-lights slid rapidly out of sight behind the snowy crag-shoulder. The sound of its racing motor faded, died away. For a moment Kane hesitated, peering down the road, then he turned back to the house. His thin lips drew together in a straight, grim line.

He passed through the door, closed it behind him. He glanced about the room at the faint blood-spots on the thick rug, the upholstered chair pulled slightly awry by the weight of Fred's slumped body. Then he remembered Bunny, waiting in the parked car. Drawing his overcoat about him, he once more started for the door, then stopped short. From the icy stillness outside soared the sound of voices raised in shouts and laughter.

A man's voice, booming above the others, said: "Good old Quinn. He's waiting for us with the eats. And, boys and girls, am I hungry?"

Kane heard a babel of agreement. Then he sensed the situation—it was a party of young men and women from the lake, arriving on skis. They'd arranged with Quinn to have supper prepared for them. That's why the fish. . . . In a flash, Kane was beside Fred's sprawled body. The big man had been struck, vitally, by only one slug. The wound in his chest was clean, bloodless. He had bled internally. Kane grasped the huge frame and dragged it into the kitchen, then came back into the room, shutting the door behind him.

He stood in the center of the room, cool and somber-faced. The front door opened and the group of boys and girls, loudly chattering, surged in, skis flung over their shoulders. They stopped suddenly, stared, ceased all talking, when they saw him.

Kane spoke quietly. "You'll have to call off your party."

The group eyed him curiously, then

began stacking their skis along the wall by the door. A slim, red-haired girl in a striped sweater and long corduroys, stepped in front of him, said: "Why? Is there anything wrong?"

"There is nothing wrong," said Kane evenly, "but the party's off. You'd better leave."

The redhead drew off a knitted cap, shook her curls. "Where's Mr. Quinn?" she spoke quite levelly, too, and Kane knew from the open, questioning gaze in her clear blue eyes that he would have to be very, very careful.

He said: "Quinn no longer works here. Mr. Sanford got onto these little parties he's been giving. He didn't like it. So Quinn had to go."

The redhead gazed quite frankly at Kane for a moment. Then she threw her cap onto a chair. "That's too bad about Quinn. And there's no supper ready, then?"

Kane shook his head, smiled coldly. "No."

"Who are you?" she said suddenly.

Kane thrust his hands into his overcoat pockets. His eyes swept the gathering in a cold appraisal. He said suavely: "I'm a private detective—from Sacramento. Mr. Sanford sent me to investigate. Now will you go?" The note in his voice was ominous.

Dropping quite unconcernedly onto a divan, the redhead said: "My feet are wet." She began unlacing her shoes. "And I couldn't think of leaving without first having something to eat, a highball—anything."

Kane's mind worked rapidly. He'd get them settled down for a moment, in time to get out. He said: "Everybody sit down. Wait here, I'll mix some drinks for you. No—" as the redhead arose—"I'll get them. Sit down."

There was a shower of caps and mittens, and a clatter of loud talk as the visitors made a rush for chairs. As Kane closed the kitchen door behind him he glanced back, saw the redhead easing off her shoes, holding wet toes in her hands.

In the kitchen, Kane hurdled the bodies of the dead men. He threw open the side door, sped around the corner of the house and across the circular drive. He stopped, cursed furiously. Too late! His thin lips closed together in a straight line and he gave a short throaty growl as he realized that he should not have trusted that rabbit-faced driver. Crawford and the car were gone. He cursed Crawford—and Lawler. It was now clear what had happened. Lawler had rushed out of the house and ordered the driver to drive away as quickly as possible.

Kane, thin lips still drawn, looked about—across the snow that covered everything, the farmhouse roof, the trees, the hillside. Escape across that white expanse was impossible—now. Then his thoughts went back to the group inside. He knew he would have to act quickly—get back into the house to prevent some meddlesome fool from stumbling into the kitchen, discovering the bodies.

Back across the drive, he streaked and in the kitchen door. Cursing, he hurried about, flinging open doors and drawers, searching for cocktail ingredients. As he flung the drinks together, he cursed himself for not having torn the phone from the wall. Then he remembered he had not seen a phone and that he'd really been too busy to look for one.

The drinks he finally poured into the glasses were sloppily mixed—but strong. He'd made sure to put a double quantity of gin into the shaker. With the trayful of glasses, he walked gravely into the living room and served cocktails.

FOR a moment there was silence as visitors sipped their drinks, passed cigarettes, lighted them. Then as Kane was on his way to the kitchen again the front door opened softly, and a stranger entered. Kane paused, turned about and saw a thick,

heavy, dark-browed man, the brim of his felt hat drawn down over his keen, hard eyes.

The visitors paused in the midst of their drinking, looked at the intruder warily. The stranger closed the door behind him, strode into the middle of the room, eyed the gathering speculatively. Kane placed the empty tray on a side table, and began to edge toward the front door. The stranger was a detective, Kane was sure. It was written all over the man's features.

Suddenly the intruder barked: "Where's Quinn?"

Members of the skiing party looked at each other questioningly. Then they made a series of amazed gasping sounds as there came a sharp scream from another room. Every light went out.

Kane, sliding by the skis ranged along the wall, heard the detective shout: "The safe! Someone's at the safe! Closing it! The lights go off when it's closed."

In that awful moment of darkness, followed by the terrified scream of a woman, Kane's fingers closed about a pair of skis by the door. He was tiptoeing forward when the lights flashed on again, just as suddenly as they had winked out.

The detective exclaimed: "Now the safe door's closed again."

There came a sound of running steps, a woman's voice crying hysterically: "It's gone. The necklace!"

The room became a bedlam. Men and women jumped up, ran about shouting questions in utter confusion. But despite the commotion there were two in the room who were utterly calm—Kane and the detective.

The detective, looking very hard at Kane, thundered: "Quiet. Everybody quiet."

The noise subsided somewhat; the room became partly still.

Then from the landing on the stairs came the sound of someone furiously dialing the telephone. A woman's voice shouted: "Police! Mr. Sanford's house has been robbed."

Silently Kane cursed the woman for a prowling, meddling fool.

The detective, his keen, hard eyes darting about the room, said: "Sit down—all of you." Then as his eyes rested on Kane: "You, too!" Kane's lips twisted in a thin smile. His thoughts turned swiftly to the necklace in his pocket, the bodies on the kitchen floor. In that moment, standing there by the door with the detective's hard glare upon him, he knew he would have to kill the man. And the fingers of his hand flexed involuntarily.

There was no other way out. Something in the detective's manner told him plainer than any words that could be said that the detective was fully apprized of the situation. No doubt the detective had been sent there to watch Quinn—to do the very thing that Kane had told the visitors that Kane was there for.

The twisted smile still on his lips, Kane's fingers plucked at the butt of his automatic in his coat pocket. All he had to do was to turn his wrist ever so lightly downward and the gun barrel would point directly at the detective's heart.

And his fingers were slowly, surely closing about the gun butt when another scream was heard, this time from the back of the house—the kitchen. Again members of the skiing party were thrown into a shocked silence.

A voice, startled, high-pitched, said: "What's happened?"

Kane's eyes, now filled with a murderous gleam, slid toward the kitchen door. He cursed the red-haired girl for prying as she ran shoeless into the room, her blue eyes wide, staring.

"He's dead! Quinn! Somebody else, too!"

The detective never turned, but kept his eyes glued on Kane. Suddenly there was the sound of three swift reports—from Kane's gun. And the murderous gleam in Kane's reddish

brown eyes grew stronger as he saw the detective lurch forward and fall onto his knees.

IN THE stunned silence that followed, Kane grasped the pair of skis standing by the front door, sprang out into the night. For a split second he stopped, threw the skis on the ground. On the driveway twenty feet away was the detective's car. There was one chance in a thousand that it would not be locked.

Kane opened the car door, pressed down the starting pedal with his hand. The starter gave a protesting growl, but the engine did not turn over. Kane gave another push downward. The engine failed to respond.

With a throaty growl, he flung himself from the car, picked up the skis. There was a businesslike calm about him as he sped around to the rear of the house. Back there was a barrier of trees. In the shadow of a thick-bodied pine he stopped, fumbled with the skis, awkwardly, adjusting them onto his shoes.

Behind him, in the house with its blazing lights, there rose an excited clamor, the loud banging of doors, men's voices calling. There was a rush of footsteps; a spatter of bullets flailed about him.

Kane smiled confidently as he straightened up on the skis. He started off in the shadows, then one leg slid from under him and he found himself floundering helplessly, sprawled in the snow. His smile vanished, his thin lips grew taut. With some difficulty he struggled up, tried again. This time he pushed forward a dozen paces before he fell again.

His confidence returned. In the dozen paces he had negotiated he'd learned something of the manipulation of the things. Another try and he'd have the knack of it. At least he'd be able to handle the skis expertly enough to elude his pursuers.

In fact he did seem to be leaving them behind. He pushed through the deep shadows of the barrier and beyond it where he found himself looking down at the lake across a precipitous declivity. The treeless descent in front of him lay white and gleaming under the stars. While below the ice-covered lake, cupped in the hills, reposed in dark outline, motionless, mysterious.

As Kane sped down the declivity, the cold air whipping the blood into his cheeks, pressing his overcoat tightly against his bent knees, he saw the lights of a village in the distance. The lights of Beavers—high up on the hill on the far side of the lake. Traveling at sixty miles an hour as he was now, the momentum should cause him to ski halfway across the lake. The remaining distance across wouldn't take long to negotiate. At Beavers he'd taxi back to the city.

His hand flew to his side, pressed against his coat pocket. His thin lips twisted in a smile. The necklace was there. Safe. He felt its hard uneven outline. All his! There'd be no splits —with Lawler, with anyone.

Below him, in black shadow, was the lake, its surface thickness cold and still and deserted in the night's small hours. Under him the curved toes of his skis dropped over the last thin ridge, plunged down the descent.

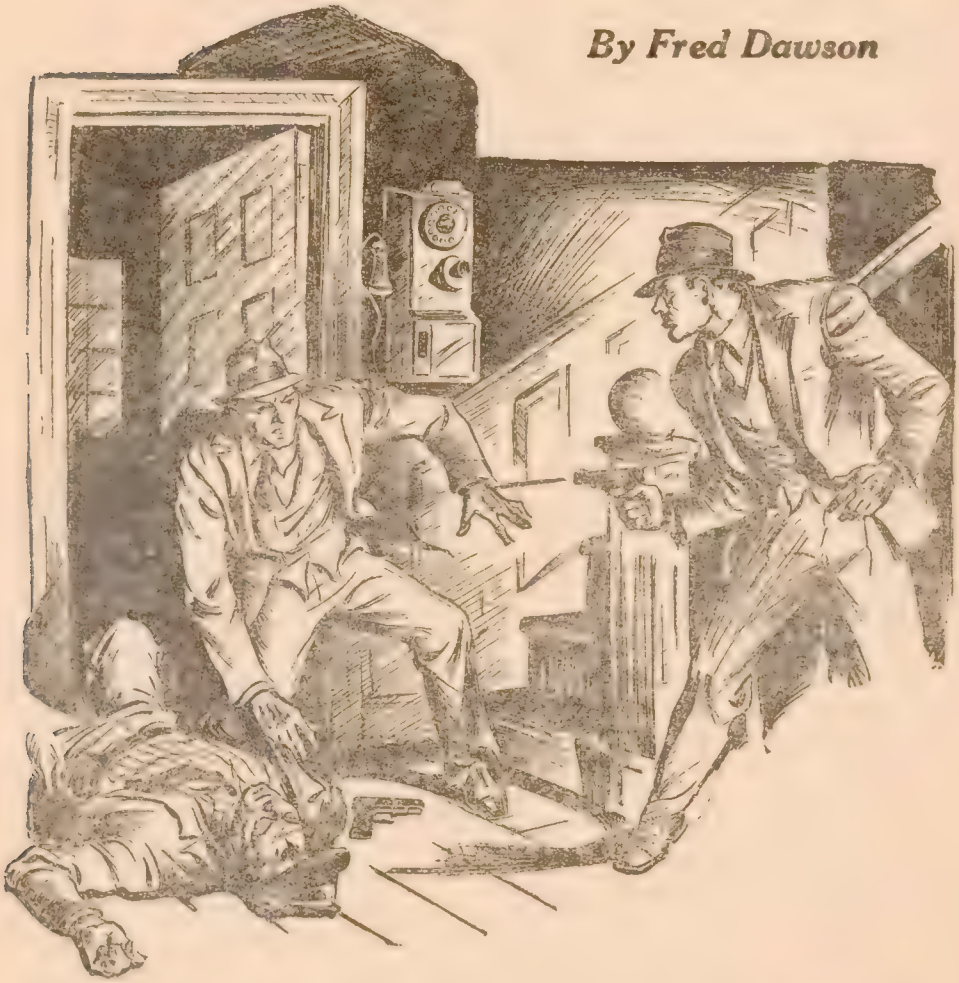
Kane's heart pounded to the thrill of it. Sport! Speed! This was something like it. Why hadn't he tried this sport before?

In a final burst of speed, the runners leaped toward the thick ice-surface of the lake. They straightened out—toward the lights of the town. Freedom! Then, suddenly, Kane gave a furious twist of his body, tried to swing about, swerve, to avoid the black square that loomed directly ahead. But too late. Like a bird wounded in flight, his hurtling body dropped through the black hole made that very afternoon by the ice-cutters. The hole from which Quinn had snared the fish.

The next day they found him—Kane—his skis tangled in Quinn's fishnet.

Sleuth by Proxy

By Fred Dawson



It was up to Jig Haxall to check phonographs in all the town joints. But when Jig tried to record a murder mystery, he was slated to hear the disc of doom.

IT WAS very early in the morning, but the one customer in the tavern was sprawled all over the bar and shooting his mouth off. Crouched in front of the automatic phonograph, taking out the coins, checking which records had been played, selecting those discs he'd take out and those he'd put on in their place, Jig's color was high and his gray eyes angrily bright.

But he concentrated on the music box. For a fellow whose job consisted of tending phonos, he had a habit of getting into a lot of trouble, and he'd heard about it from the office lately. So he tried to ignore the guy's remarks. There was something vaguely

familiar about the man, but Jig figured he was just a barfly, of which he saw many.

"That lousy Vinson," the guy shouted, "was never anything but a damned louse. Sure he killed Reuwer! What the hell you think he did? Just a dirty damned crook, hiding behind a detective's badge, that's all!"

Jig's fists tightened, and he gritted his teeth. But he didn't turn. It wouldn't help Detective Lieutenant Vinson any for him to fight every loud-mouth in the city.

The bartender said in a loud, hoarse whisper: "You better button that lip! That's Jig Haxall, and he's Vinson's pal."

The next thing Jig knew, he'd received a terrific boot in the pants. He fell forward, bounced up, whirling.

The big guy demanded: "You got any objections to what I said?"

Jig was blond, clean-cut of face, gray-eyed, and of medium weight and build. The man facing him was tall, heavy and scowling. Without any hesitation, Jig smacked him square on the mouth and slammed him down on the floor with a thud that set bottles and glasses rattling and clinking behind the bar.

The barkeep skipped out with a hefty slap, clipped the guy lightly behind the ear, hustled him to his feet, and shoved him toward the door, growling: "Gwan, get out! You had too much to drink already. Slipping and sliding and falling all over the place. You'll hurt yourself and give the joint a bad name! Get out!"

Cursing and grumbling, the hard guy gave Jig a ferocious look, spat blood venomously on the floor, and shoved out through the doors.

Jig turned back to the phono, shaking a trifle. The barkeep washed a glass, polished it, and swabbed the mahogany. As Jig closed and lifted his heavy black case, the barkeep murmured:

"Don't let it get you, Jig. You'd be surprised the friends a square cop ain't got. A crooked cop—the gunsels and crooks he was protecting start shouting for him, telling how good a guy he is, because they want him to get clear and keep protecting them. And everybody else keeps his mouth shut because those guys might shut it for him.

"But an honest cop! Everybody talks. Some because they naturally hate a good guy and want to help wreck him. And the rest because they enjoy a chance to sound off without any danger of tasting knuckles. Any time you hear everyone picking on a guy that's down, you can be pretty sure he ain't in with the wrong crowd, or nobody would open a mouth."

Jig nodded, attempted a friendly grin, and went outside to his car. He drove along moodily, eyes half shut, gritting his teeth. But he snapped alive at sight of the burly man in baggy clothes trudging along—apparently with nowhere to go, but trying to get there, out of a lifelong habit of performing purposeful acts.

Jig jumped out of the car and ran to him. "Vinson!"

Vinson bleared at him, shook his head, cleared his eyes, and said quietly: "Jig."

JIG pulled him out to the car. They got in and sat side by side. After a minute, Jig said: "I've heard about this from everyone else, and I've read it in the papers, so I don't know why I shouldn't hear it from you."

"I hate to tell it!" Vinson's voice shook. "It was natural and the simplest thing in the world when it happened. But when they make you tell it over and over, you begin to feel like a rotten dirty liar."

"We're friends," Jig retorted. "I have to hear it from you, you know that."

Vinson answered dully: "I was walking home last night, and I turned into Florence Street. I don't know why. It was a little after ten. The lights aren't so good along there, but I saw these two men. I thought they were drunk. One had his back against

the wall, the other sort of leaning against him. The big one was sort of laying all over the smaller one. Just as I took a step past them, Reuwer called my name. I spun back quick, and the way he'd called me, I was going for my gun.

"But I never even got turned. This other fellow smashed me back of the head and I went down. When I came out of it, I was on the sidewalk. So was my gun. So was Leonard Reuwer. Only he was dead—someone had shot him with my revolver. A minute later the radio car came along. There it is, I walked into a holdup, got a bad break, and now—now I'm suspended!"

"Damn it!" Jig pounded the steer-wheel rim. "How could they do it to you? What the devil do they accuse you of?"

"Well," Vinson laughed, as if at himself, "some of them at headquarters don't like me. Then, the newspapers made a big to-do out of it. If I was innocent, then I was incompetent, and the papers think there are too many incompetent cops. If I wasn't innocent—then I'm a killer. Someone dragged up this stuff about the protection money Reuwer's been paying. They hinted I had a cut of that, and that I put the screws on Reuwer to make him pay up.

"Now they're even saying I followed Reuwer into Florence Street and that there was no third man at all. But the main thing is, some headquarters big shots aren't popular with the press. They're afraid if they get the papers' backs up over this, the papers will start a real all-or-nothing campaign."

"That's dopey!" Jig exclaimed. "Reuwer was robbed! How could he have been, and his money not on you, unless there was a third person to beat it with his money?"

"Don't try to think of anything these babies haven't answered," Vinson advised scoffingly. "They say I either got rid of the dough, and then knocked myself out, or that I had an accomplice and let him get away with it."

Jig clasped and unclasped his hands, almost pulling his thumbs off. "You have no idea who he was? None?"

Vinson shook his head. "He was big. I know that from the way he was leaning all over Reuwer. It's easy enough to see what happened. He was holding Reuwer up. When I came along, he shoved Reuwer against the wall to keep him like that till I got passed. But Reuwer tried to get me to help him."

"What makes you so sure it was a holdup?"

"What else—" Vinson peered at him. "There you go! I never saw a guy like you, for thinking up some angle no one else figured on. It was a holdup, don't worry about that."

"Well, what are you going to do?"

"They're going to have me up on charges." Vinson opened the car door. "The best I can hope for is that they only put me back in harness, with a suspension. What I think they'll do is break me, and suspend me indefinitely. Just let me drag on for months, then years." Breath whistled up his nostrils. "Until then, I'm going to walk." He got out of the car. "I feel like I won't go nuts if I keep walking and walking." He turned away and walked off, head sunken between his hunched shoulders.

WATCHING him go, Jig choked down an exclamation of rage and despair. He started the car, drove a block, serviced a phono. When he came out of the place, he cut from his route, and drove directly to Reuwer's restaurant.

He bumped a man, going in, recognized Carl MacCrowe, but MacCrowe kept going on out as if he wanted no apology, and neither said anything. Inside, the tables were all set with fresh white tablecloths, though there was no silver about. The only one in sight was Mrs. Reuwer. Jig nodded to her, but she looked right through him. He went back to the auto-phono.

He barely had the machine open, when a man in cook's white cap and apron stuck his head out the kitchen door and caught sight of him. The man's mouth was puffed and discolored at the corner. Except for that, Jig would hardly have recognized Paul Adkins, Reuwer's cook, the transformation from the barroom brawler Jig had tangled with earlier, to cook. was so complete. Adkins disappeared, then smacked the door open and came forward with a cleaver. Jig grabbed a chair.

Mrs. Reuwer popped out one word: "Paul!"

Adkins reluctantly turned his head toward her. She gestured for him to get back into the kitchen. Adkins glared at Jig, at the chair Jig had swung up and was holding ready. Cursing under his breath, and waving the cleaver, Adkins went back into the kitchen.

Jig dumped four nickels out of the collection can, and exclaimed. His eyes darted to the indicator, and he marked in his notebook the four records that had been played. He shut the machine and stared again at one of the nickels. It was deeply cut across in two directions, making a crossmark, and someone had spent time putting that cross on so carefully.

Hefting his black case, Jig went over to the cigar counter, where Mrs. Reuwer sat behind the cash register. He wondered if she wanted him to say anything about the loss of her husband, and decided she didn't. He leaned on the counter, smiled a little.

"Mrs. Reuwer, would you tell me who played the phonograph this morning?"

She just looked at him. She was a strong woman, with black hair, a tight-skinned flattish face, and dark, hostile eyes.

Jig went on: "You might think that's crazy, but the real part of my job is to try to find out who likes what records. That's the only way I can put on each machine the discs that people near it will want to hear."

She still didn't say anything. There was a contemptuous lift to one corner of her wide mouth.

"I know the records were played this morning," Jig smiled. "Because I was in here last night as Mr. Reuwer was closing. I took the money out of the machine and set the indicator back. I know there were four records played, and I know which ones. I thought maybe you could help me."

"I played the phonograph." Her voice was like the growl of a lioness. "So did Adkins. And Zieman."

"But it was played four times. Who played the other record? It must have been MacCrowe. The usual breakfast crowd doesn't want music. It would be someone like MacCrowe, eating alone with all the time in the world, who would want music in the morning."

"I don't know!" She tossed her plump, black-dressed shoulders. "I gave MacCrowe the breakfast he asked for. Then I went out to the refrigerator to check on the meat. Adkins was busy washing pots and pans. The rest of the time he was in and out of the refrigerator."

And out getting boozed up, Jig thought.

EDWARD ZIEMAN came in, smiling and cheerful. He laid a wad of bills and rolls of coins on the counter, nodded to Jig. Then he stepped away, busied himself setting breadsticks in glasses on the tables.

Jig suggested: "Maybe Zieman would know."

"He was out to the bank," she rejoined. "Didn't you just see him give me the money he brought back?"

Jig glanced at Zieman. He was every bit as big as Adkins the cook, but sleek. Zieman wore his dark clothes well, looked dapper in them. He had a waiter's knack of looking compact and unobtrusive, splendidly neat. Zieman took a last look at the tables, slapped the door swinging and went into the kitchen.

Jig leaned over the counter. "Mrs. Reuwer, do you know anything about

this protection money your husband was paying?"

Her dark, flattish face swelled and reddened dully. "You'd better mind your own business. I thought you had your nose into more than concerns you."

Jig picked up his black case and went out. His car was round the corner. He put the case into it, and was about to get in, when Zieman came out of the little alley at the back of the restaurant.

"Jig!" He ran over, keeping his voice down. "What would she not tell you?" Zieman glanced about. "Reuwer was very good boss, good friend. Anything I could know, could do, you ask me."

"Did MacCrowe play the phonograph?"

Zieman's face lit up. "He asks me if *South of the Border* plays on the machine. I say yes. But then I have to go to the bank. I do not know if he plays."

"How often did MacCrowe come here? Every day, or what?"

"Every week," Zieman answered. "Like this, on Wednesday morning, for late breakfast. He says nothing, not to me, not to Reuwer. But I think Reuwer does not like him. It is a feeling."

"You know where he lives?"

Zieman slapped a hand up, covering his narrow smooth forehead and patent-leather black hair. "I think—Fourteen Astor Street? Is this correct?"

"I'll tell you later."

Zieman caught his arm. "I am wanting to help. Please, why does it matter if MacCrowe plays the phonograph? Perhaps if you tell me these things I can watch who else plays it today. I can tell you, eh?"

Jig shook his head. "It won't matter any more now. But thanks, Zieman. I'll try to see you later. Meanwhile, keep your ears open." Jig got into the car and stuck his head out. "Keep your eyes open too."

He drove off and left Zieman standing there hunched up and confused, hands spread helplessly.

Jig made a couple of stops along the way, servicing phonos, trying to concentrate on each as he tended it. In between he thought about MacCrowe. It was nearly an hour till he worked his way over to Astor Street. Fourteen was a big old brownstone house of the sort that's been converted into apartments and light housekeeping rooms.

THE greenish dirty brass bell plates contained frayed, crackling strips of paper with faded names and numbers. Beside MacCrowe was the digit four.

As Jig struck the big front door open, the sunlight shafted in and made the dusty-carpeted and faded wallpapered hall bright and almost cheerful. But the moment he stepped in and the solid door shut, Jig was astounded at the total darkness in which he found himself. He groped his way to the stairs, and started up.

The man must have been down at the side of the staircase, and he must have stuck his hand between the banisters to get hold of Jig's ankle. But get hold he did, and jerked. Jig fell on his face, striking his forehead on a step edge, and slid down the stairs, stunned. He tried to fight, but about as effectually as a man in a dream. For one thing he did have the instinct—and that was to jerk his head away. As he did, something hit the steps hard, and Jig's nostrils filled with dust.

Jig kicked. Then bright light fell into the hall, hit him as hard as a blow, and he knew the front door had opened. He heard running, an exclamation, a fall.

Struggling to his feet, Jig leaned on the newel post. Vinson came from the back of the hall, cursing.

"Damn it, I tripped over the carpet there, and he got away."

"What?" Jig rubbed his head. The door was closed again, the hall pitch dark. "How'd you get here?"

"I was walking," Vinson said gruffly. "Saw your car and couldn't figure

what you were doing here. I know what you are for getting into trouble. Good thing I stuck my head in."

Jig nodded. Vinson struck a match, found the switch and turned on the light. The hall was only gloomy then, not dark.

"Guy was waiting for you," Vinson observed. "Who?"

Jig shook his head. "I came here to see Carl MacCrowe. Let's go up."

MacCrowe was a big man in every respect, but his light-skinned face seemed too big even for him. It was ordinarily an impassive face, but at sight of Jig and Vinson, MacCrowe scowled and his mouth twisted as if he were cursing. He didn't invite them in. He looked more as if he were considering keeping them out, but they entered. It was a small room with a sofa and a couple of chairs.

"Came to tell you a little story," Jig announced. "Vinson hasn't heard this yet either, so I'll only have to tell it once."

"Make it short!" MacCrowe growled, and flicked his eyes at Vinson. "Then both of you get out of here."

Vinson dug his fists deeper into his pockets.

Jig began: "I worked a late trick last night, and got to Reuwer's restaurant just as he was closing. All I had time for was to take the money out of the machine and set back the indicator that shows how many times each platter has been played. Reuwer told me he'd put his lucky nickel into the machine and asked me to give it to him. I did." Jig paused. "Within the hour, on his way home, Reuwer was murdered."

MacCrowe sneered and glanced Vinson's way. "Vinson could tell you all about that."

"THIS morning," Jig continued, "I went to Reuwer's, and found the phonograph had been played four times. Mrs. Reuwer played it, so did Zieman and Adkins. So did you, MacCrowe." Jig took a coin from the corner of his handkerchief, showed it to be a cross-marked nickel. "There's Reuwer's lucky nickel. It was taken from him last night, and put in the machine to play a record this morning."

MacCrowe's face became white, and his eyes swelled. He had the look of a man who has just experienced the amazing suddenness with which an ordinary room can turn into a death trap.

"Well, why blame me?" he croaked. "Listen, what the hell are you two trying to do? You don't scare me! Get out of here! I read the papers. Vinson, you're no more of a cop right now than I am. You got no right here!"

"I picked on you," Jig admitted. "I go to many places at all hours, MacCrowe. Wherever there's girls, gambling, guzzling or gypping, I see you. You don't work. I've often meant to ask Vinson about your means of support. I thought it queer for you to be in Reuwer's for breakfast. It's far away. You don't work, and have no money.

"Reuwer was paying protection money. What else were you in his restaurant for, but to collect it? Only this morning you probably went just to make it look as if you didn't know anything had happened to Reuwer—because you ate there regularly once a week on Wednesday mornings."

"I'll give both of you one minute to get out of here!" MacCrowe shouted.

Vinson came away from the door, moving toward MacCrowe.

"What's the matter?" Vinson asked. "Wouldn't Reuwer pay? Maybe you tried to throw a scare into him last night so he'd have the payoff ready this morning. When he saw me passing, he decided to take a chance and expose the whole thing. But you were too quick."

"Nuts!" MacCrowe sputtered.

"You better get out, Jig." Vinson turned his head back to MacCrowe. Vinson's face was as cold and shiny as polished ice.

Jig didn't get it. He just stood at the door, puzzled.

MacCrowe raged: "He better get out and he better take you to hell out of here with him, if he knows what's good for the two of you! I'm telling you, get out of here, Vinson!"

"Twenty-two years on the force!" Vinson said thickly. "The last year a detective lieutenant. Now it's all going to be kicked down the stairs in a matter of minutes. You think I won't fight that? You think I won't hurt someone? I got a wife and two kids. You think I'm not going to lift a hand? This is me, not some punk." Without turning, Vinson repeated: "You better get out, Jig."

Jig didn't feel as if he could move for anything.

MacCrowe weakened, but gathered himself and sneered. "Get out yourself, Vinson, or I'll call a cop that's still a cop, and show you you haven't got all the trouble you're going to have. You're not even a boy scout now."

"And who've I got to thank for that?"

Vinson smashed him full in the face and sent him skating across the room into the couch. Shoulders hunched, Vinson stalked after him. The man had changed. He was no longer the ordinary Vinson—he scared even Jig. He looked as if he didn't want to hear from MacCrowe now any more, as if nothing would dispel the killer-heat that had come on him.

"Don't kill me!" MacCrowe begged. "I'll tell, Vinson. Only you have to believe me!" He shouted as if trying to pierce the fog on Vinson's mind and calm him. "Here's the whole story. I framed Reuwer with a dame, caught him with her—the old badger game. Reuwer started paying off, Wednesday mornings regular. He told his wife he was paying for protection, to account for the money.

"I swear that I didn't kill him! Never had any trouble with him. His wife wants a divorce anyway, and with what I could have told her, she could have got it and stripped him clean too. I wasn't near him last night. I was right here."

VINSON studied him for a long time. MacCrowe didn't dare even to raise a hand to wipe away the blood trickling down his chin.

"Don't go anywhere, MacCrowe," Vinson warned. "I'm going to see the man that murdered Reuwer last night. And if that means seeing you again—the farther I have to go to get you, the worse I'll make it when I get you."

Vinson turned on his heel and strode out. Jig followed him.

Out in the street, they stood blinking in the sunshine. Jig let out a big sigh. "They told me you used to be an awful tough cop. I see what they meant."

Vinson moved his shoulders as if they were itching under his clothing. "They were kidding you."

"Yeah! Well, what now?"

"They're having me up on charges this afternoon," Vinson muttered. "That leaves me time to get to Reuwer's and see what I can. At least it's narrowed down. I don't know about MacCrowe. But if he didn't do it, then Zieman or Adkins did."

Jig leaned back against his car. "There's been nothing done that a good strong woman like Mrs. Reuwer couldn't have done. That's why I said maybe it wasn't a holdup for sure. It's far-fetched, sure. But suppose she wanted to get rid of Reuwer. She disguises as a man, meets him in the street. There was no love between them. According to MacCrowe she wanted a divorce and couldn't get it. Maybe she has a heart interest. Disguised as a man, she could have been the one last night."

Vinson studied him with cloudy eyes, said nothing.

"Well," Jig said, getting into his car, "make time to see me again after you've been to the restaurant. I ought to be working Pennsylvania Avenue an hour or so from now. By the way, do you know Paul Adkins, the cook at Reuwer's?"

"Uh-huh. I had to take him in as drunk and disorderly once. He got hurt. Don't think I was being tough. I wasn't. He carried on like a wild man—there was no restraining him. Getting into the patrol car, he fell and hit his head on the curbing. Had to have some stitches in it. He tried to bring charges of manhandling against me." Vinson laughed unpleasantly. "It wasn't so easy to smear the name of Vinson then."

"Adkins hasn't forgotten it."

"So okay."

"I mean, don't let him see your back." Jig started the motor. "Zieman knew I was going to MacCrowe's." Jig drove off.

The next hour or so it was hell to keep his mind on his job. Jig was dragging down more pay than the usual man on this work. And only because he'd studied the tastes of the public. He could glance at a dozen good records and name the spot where each would earn its maximum on a phono, and the places where each would gather only dust.

It wasn't enough for a record to be good. It had to be in the right locale, and that might be an ice cream parlor only half a block from a tavern. In the ice cream place, the platter would roll up the coins; in the tavern it wouldn't get a play. Working as close to things as that, and constantly checking on shifting public preferences, took concentration.

Jig came out of the biggest eatery and café in the Negro section, his mind full of surprises. It was in this section that he frequently got his first intimation of discs that would later be popular. And it was here where he found Vinson waiting for him. Jig couldn't tell anything from Vinson's set face. But the shake of Vinson's head made his heart sink.

They got into Jig's car.

"I TACKLED Zieman first because he was the one who knew you were headed for MacCrowe's, and could have ambushed you." Vinson sighed. "Nothing doing. Zieman never left the restaurant. I checked with the cop on the beat. He has a habit of ducking into the restaurant kitchen for coffee and rolls. He saw Zieman around for enough of the time that Zieman couldn't have gone to MacCrowe's."

"Adkins? Mrs. Reuwer?"

"The cop didn't see Adkins. Zieman said that after you left he asked Adkins where MacCrowe lived, because he wanted to make sure he'd given you the right address. That was all. But for an hour Adkins wasn't around."

Jig whistled.

Vinson snorted: "Mrs. Reuwer says that Adkins was in the cellar the whole time, shifting stuff around and checking on canned goods. She saw him constantly. There are lots of people that know she was there all the time. And she says Adkins was too. So what can you do?"

"Well, what are you going to do?"

Vinson got out of the car heavily. "Walk! It's the only thing that keeps my brain from getting in a knot. Walk and check up on MacCrowe. I like him best. His alibi for last night—that he was sitting home alone—smells. I know where I can find out a few things about him."

"And the others?"

Vinson made a mouth. "I don't think much of them."

"Not even when you know now that Adkins is Mrs. Reuwer's heart interest?" Jig exclaimed. "Why do you think she alibied him like that? She's nuts about him—and has him under control. I saw that this morning. He was sore at me. But a word from her and he went back into the kitchen like a trained dog."

"I've got to follow my hunch. I don't have much time." Vinson frowned thoughtfully. "You see how it is. Maybe you're right—maybe I'm right. But I feel MacCrowe, and I have to work him. Then I got to hurry and appear before the commissioner."

"Good luck!" Jig said hoarsely. "If you don't win, they won't be doing

anything to you that won't be hurting me just as much, Vinson."

Vinson caught his hand and wrung it, but wouldn't let him catch his eyes. Then Vinson pivoted and went off up the street, the sun shining on his shabby loose old coat. Jig nearly choked on the lump in his throat.

Sure, Vinson had to follow his hunch. Jig looked toward an old building that had been a theater, which was now a shell, where dances were held at night by a local social club. There was a phono in there. Jig drove to it, then kept on going. He had his hunch too. He kept on driving till he was parked near the alley in back of Reuwer's restaurant.

Paul Adkins was seasoning a boiler of peppery smelling soup. His apron and cap were dirtier now than they had been. He dropped his big long spoon into the pot and started for Jig, whooping.

"Cut out the nonsense!" Jig ordered.

Adkins halted, stood leering and scowling, as if he might erupt at any moment. "Give you a minute to get out."

"Somebody here is going to pay for Reuwer's murder," Jig declared. He produced the cross-marked nickel. "That's Reuwer's lucky coin. I took it out of the machine and gave it to him last night. This morning that coin was back in the machine. You and Zieman and Harriet Reuwer put coins in that phono. One of you robbed Reuwer last night and didn't have sense enough to realize how dangerous this marked nickel was."

"Aw, you're crazy!" But a new expression had come into Adkins' face. It was almost as if he was thinking, and the light in his eyes left no doubt that his brain was at work.

"Where's Mrs. Reuwer?" Jig demanded.

Adkins jerked up his chin.

JIG glanced over where the refrigerator took up the whole corner of the kitchen, the size of a small room in itself. The handle of the thick wooden door was up, as if someone might be in there. As Jig backed a step, to keep his eyes on Adkins and on the refrigerator door, Adkins snatched up a knife and flung it.

The knife missed and stuck quivering in the wood of the refrigerator. Jig had no time to get set. Adkins jumped him, swinging a heavy wooden potato masher. Jig tried to avoid it, couldn't, and Adkins smacked him on the forehead. It dazed Jig for only a moment, just long enough for Adkins to shove him into the refrigerator and slam the door.

Jig sprang at the door with the whole weight of his body behind his hands, trying to knock it open, but Adkins already had it locked. Jig let out what was undoubtedly the loudest yell he'd ever emitted. The yell almost burst his throat, almost shattered his ears. Beyond that he knew it had no effect.

There was no use beating at the metal inside sheathing of the tremendous door, no use yelling in here. The walls were a foot thick and thoroughly insulated. And even while he stood thinking of that, the cold began to get at him.

Jig forced himself to walk back and forth rapidly. How long it went on he didn't know. He glanced at his watch several times, but he could never remember what time it had been when he'd looked at it before. He got terribly cold. Tired. He wanted to sit down. He kept himself moving. But he felt that nothing was worth this much effort. He ought to let himself sit down for a minute, just for one minute.

The sight of the bloody meat hanging on the hooks kept him moving. For a while, he thought that Adkins would have to let him out. What could Adkins do with his corpse, if he froze to death in here? The meat hanging on the hooks answered that. Adkins was butcher as well as cook. He could hang anything in here, if he made it

look like meat, and dispose of it a piece at a time. Jig shuddered.

The big cuts of meat hanging on the hooks had been blood red and moistly fresh-looking when first he'd come in here. Now the meat looked darker, frozen. Jig touched a finger to a piece and found it as hard as iron. Adkins had turned the refrigerator on as cold as he could.

Flapping his arms and stamping his feet, Jig kept going—to the door, back to the far end, to the door, to the far end. He was so weak and cold now, so overcome with the monotony of the short narrow path he had to walk, that every time he had to turn to retrace his steps, the effort dizzied and nearly overcame him.

He knew he couldn't keep this up much longer. He felt that he couldn't keep it up another minute. But he thought of Vinson, and what he would be able to do for Vinson if only he got out of here, and he kept moving.

THE door opened and the sleek, dapper Zieman gestured fiercely for him to come out, motioning for silence. Jig stumbled out. There was a coffee pot steaming on the huge stove. Jig poured a soup bowl full, and drank down the coffee black and scalding hot. It hit his stomach like a bombshell.

"Come, come!" Zieman ordered. "We must get out. If they could catch us, they would kill us!" Zieman drew a gun from his waistband, and held it loosely, nervously watching the door from the restaurant.

Jig's hands were blue with cold. His face felt wooden. He tried to speak and could only mumble. "Where did you get the gun?"

"From the cigar counter," Zieman whispered. "Reuwer kept it always there in case of stickup men."

Adkins burst into the kitchen. He saw Jig and let out a roar that shook the room. Zieman centered the gun on him, and pulled the trigger, as Jig dove and knocked his arm up.

"You should not hold me!" Zieman screamed. "You must let go!"

"You better give up, Zieman!" Jig growled.

Zieman fought in earnest, like a cat. He was strong, and he was tricky. Jig realized that half frozen as he was, he would be no match for this opponent. He tried to hold on, and keep Zieman from using the gun.

The fight ended abruptly, and without being a contest of strength. Jig stepped into a pool of something slippery, and crashed to the floor, dragging Zieman with him. Instantly, Zieman gave him a knee hard in the face. Breaking loose, Zieman went loping away in a running plunge, in a straight line for the alley door. As he passed the meat chopping block, Adkins popped up and nicked him heavily in the back of the head with the flat side of a cleaver. Zieman hit the floor with a slap like that of a huge fish thrown down.

Groggy, half blinded, Jig weaved over and stamped on Zieman's hand till he let go of the gun. Grabbing it up, Jig faced Adkins, who stopped cursing long enough to say: "The dirty louse! Tried to frame it on me and kill me!"

"You went looking for it!" Jig retorted. "The minute you saw I had Reuwer's lucky nickel, you went and threatened Zieman. You saw him put that coin in the phono this morning. So you tried to shake him down about it."

"The hell with you!" Adkins cursed some more.

"And Zieman came and let me out so it would look as if he was my friend, and when you came, he had the gun ready. He could have killed you and he would have been defending me and himself. No one would ever think you hadn't murdered Reuwer."

"Well, I didn't!" Adkins snarled. "Zieman told me he had the money he took from Reuwer hidden out here. He came to get it for me—said for me to wait one minute and then come

out and he'd hand it over. But he let you out instead. Damn him! He killed Reuwer, not me."

"Well, you certainly acted as if you were the killer," Jig snorted. "Look at the trouble you made! Because he let you know I'd gone to see MacCrowe, you hid in MacCrowe's hallway and tried to get me. And because Mrs. Reuwer is soft on you, and didn't want any trouble that might complicate collection of Reuwer's insurance, she alibied you."

"You socked me in the mouth this morning, didn't you?" Adkins demanded. "And you ain't a pal of that louse Vinson's, I don't suppose?"

"You're a psychopathic case. The fall on your head when Vinson arrested you, did it, I guess. If you get sore at a man, you think you have to kill him."

"Well, what else?"

JIG stooped over Zieman and realized it would not be necessary to keep an eye on him. Zieman was unconscious, bleeding badly. Jig called an ambulance. Then he phoned the police. It took every effort he was capable of, but he got in touch with the commissioner. And it took an argument after that, but the commissioner said Vinson was still there, being tried. Vinson came to the phone. Jig told him to get over to the restaurant even if he had to break out of the commissioner's office.

Vinson came, sort of in custody of another detective, and got there as soon as the ambulance did. The doctor said Zieman would live, but he'd probably have a stiff neck. No one bothered to say that the stiff neck wouldn't annoy Zieman very long.

Jig was warm with elation, but he kept it under control, and told Vinson the whole story. Vinson's face lit up, the cold stiffness went out of it and the deadness faded from his eyes. He put a hand on Jig's shoulder. It trembled a little.

"But how did you know Adkins wasn't the one? It must have looked that way."

"Reuwer was looking all over for his gun last night," Jig explained. "Finally, he said he must have left it home the last time he took it there. He seemed to believe he had. So, the moment Zieman said he'd gotten the gun from the cigar counter, I knew he was lying. He took that gun last night, and put it back this morning. He would have shot Reuwer with it, only that he got the chance to use your gun instead."

They had Zieman on his feet now. He listened, and protested wildly: "No, no! I would not kill him! I meant only to get money from him. All my savings I have put into property. Now things are not so good. I told Reuwer I must pay taxes or lose everything. I beg him to lend me money. He says he cannot do it.

"So last night I knew he has a lot of money. I take the gun and I hold him up. I have a handkerchief over my face and the light in Florence Street is not good." Zieman slapped his forehead. "And what do you think? Anyway he knows me! I think maybe I can plead with him. But Vinson passes, and Reuwer is going to tell. Then, only, I kill him."

Vinson took his arm. "But you did kill him. And we got you. That's what counts." Vinson gave him to the other detective, came over and tried to thank Jig.

Jig cut him short. "Don't! There must be some way you can have this handled so that you get the credit, Vinson. And I don't feel smart. I feel like a dope. I should have realized that only Zieman would be methodical and thorough enough to kill a man then rob him of everything, even his small change. Who else would have taken even a nickel out of Reuwer's pocket, except Zieman?"

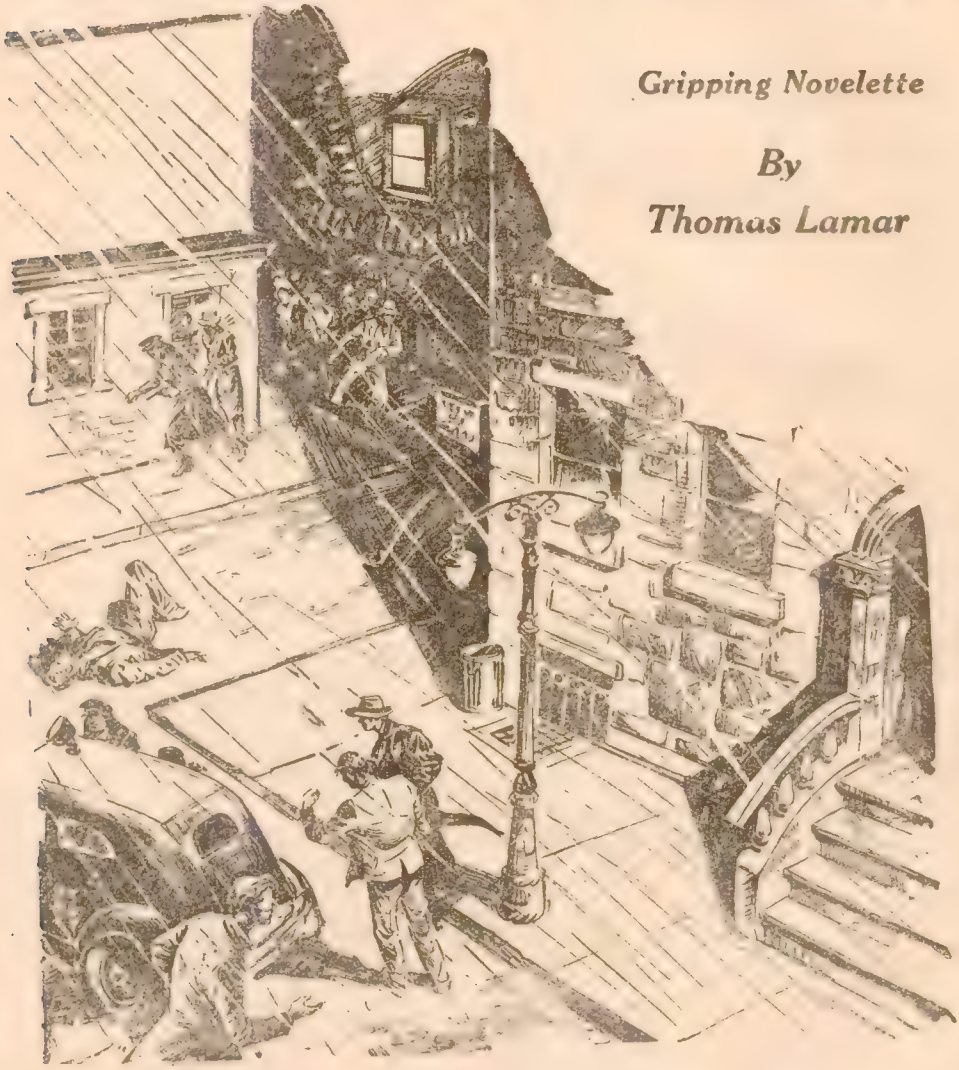
"And used it to play a record in a phono!" Vinson grunted. "Well, Zieman had his music—now he'll dance, at the end of a rope!"

Murder—in the Bag

Gripping Novelette

By

Thomas Lamar



I

THE night was wet and getting wetter. That's how I happened to duck into the Lenox Street bus station and bump into the girl hurrying out. We seesawed, like people do after sudden collisions, each trying to let the other past. Then both of us stood still.

"Oh," the girl said. "Oh." Her low voice held a frightened note.

I said, "I'm sorry," and took off my hat.

This girl was the kind you take off your hat to. Her face hadn't come off a beauty shop assembly line. She was very pretty, with royal-blue eyes, and curls in her damp hair. She wore a light slicker, and there were tiny drops of water on her lovely cheeks. Either she was crying or hadn't been in the bus station long. I couldn't tell which—then.

Newshawk Morg Butler had made arrangements to scoop the lowdown on a crime king. But, too late, Butler discovered that first he should have reserved space for himself in the obituary column.

"It was my fault." She tried to smile at me, but managed only to twist her lips.

"No," I said. "It was mine, and I owe you more than an apology. I owe you a drink. Max's bar is just down the street."

That was the wrong thing to say. She wasn't going to let me get cute. Her chin went up, and I tried another tack. Somehow I was reluctant to let this girl get away.

"My name is Morgan Butler," I said, without tagging on explanations. "And I'm at least respectable—I think."

She said nothing. So I took out my card case, handed her a card with my telephone number and apartment address below the name.

"Here's proof of the respectability. Only a—" I broke off. I could see she wasn't in the mood for bright cracks.

She took the card, giving it no attention. Looking at me levelly, she firmed her lips.

"Please," she said, "I'd like to leave."

So I moved aside. She stepped through the doorway.

I said, "I'm sorry for trying to offer you a drink," and really meant it.

THE girl didn't look back. I watched her cross the street in the rain, move down the sidewalk past street lamps, out of sight. She had a neat walk.

Then I turned toward the waiting room, intending to sit awhile on one of the benches and see if the rain wouldn't let up. The station would close at midnight—in about half an hour. Maybe the rain would stop before that, though.

But I didn't sit down.

A gray-haired woman in dark clothes was lying on the mud-spotted floor behind a bench. Her mouth was slack, her eyes turned up. There was lots of rouge and powder on her face, but make-up couldn't keep it from being pale now. She was dead.

I thought: "No wonder *she* was nervous."

There was a small brown paper bag on the seat above the corpse. I felt for a pulse in the woman's still warm body to make sure she was dead, then picked up the bag.

It was filled with Lima beans, ordinary Lima beans. I started to drop the bag back on the bench, but stuffed it into my topcoat pocket instead.

Afterwards, I knew I had done that because I was thinking of the girl.

The homicide squad sirened up a few minutes after I telephoned. Detective Lieutenant Munson was in charge. He was a small dick, stubby and fat but hard. His suit seemed tight over his muscles. He had very bright black eyes.

He said: "Hello, Butler. Where's the body?"

I pointed to where the woman lay.

Munson stepped past the bench, glanced at the woman, brought his bright eyes back to my face.

"Well," he said, half grinning. "Well! What'd you do—bump her so you could have a story for that rag you work on?"

I didn't feel like joking. I was thinking about the girl.

I said: "I came inside to get out of the rain and found her lying there—as she is now. I phoned headquarters."

"She was dead when you found her?"

"Yes."

"You didn't see any suspicious characters?"

Suspicious characters! Wasn't that just like a dick? No one else would

ever think of such a squib. For some reason it sounded funny. I didn't laugh, however.

"No," I said. "The place was empty when I found her."

At least that was literally true.

Munson's photographer and fingerprint men were at work. Without moving the body, they photographed it from several angles, examined fingerprints and sought identifying belongings. The check-up was not thorough. They merely marked time while they waited for the coroner. One of the dicks came over to Munson.

He said: "The dame's handle was Myra Withington, chief. She had a record."

Munson nodded. "I recognized her."

II

THE dick scratched his chin, said: "No marks of violence. Maybe it was poison." He rejoined the group around the body.

"Maybe there is a story in this for me, lieutenant," I hinted. "You knew her?"

Munson snorted. "Just another floosie. Gambler. All around good-time gal. Few years back she was married to a shot out on Snob Hill. In society. She started drinkin'. There was a scandal and the shot divorced her. She kept on drinkin'. Hung around joints. We had to run her in a couple of times. She got pretty tough. Now she's dead on a bus station floor. You run into lots of 'em in police work. If there's a story in it, you're welcome."

"Thanks," I told him.

I recalled tales of the Withington scandal, although it had been before my time. A rewrite man could boil a few sticks of tragedy out of the case, even if the cops didn't uncover anything more.

The coroner, Doc Peabody, arrived finally. He was a mild but grumpy little man with a fringe of white hair around a bald head, glittering spectacles and quick hands. He hardly glanced at the body.

"Coronary thrombosis," he said. "Heart disease. She died of natural causes. You boys can stop worrying."

That let the girl out and I was glad.

"You're sure, Doc? I want to phone the story in and go to bed."

"No, no, I'm not sure," Doc Peabody answered testily. "I can't be absolutely positive until after an autopsy. But I'm reasonably certain."

"Okay, Doc," I soothed. "I won't put you in the middle."

The lead had turned out routine stuff, despite all the excitement. I phoned it in to the city desk and walked to my apartment. The rain had stopped and the air smelled clean and fresh. It would be a good night to sleep.

But I didn't do much sleeping, after all.

In my apartment, I felt the weight of the beans in my topcoat when I took it off. The paper bag was slightly damp from being next to the wet cloth. I took it into the kitchenette—because that seemed the place for beans.

I was sitting on the edge of my bed, dropping my shoes, when the buzzer sounded. I pressed the button for the automatic latch downstairs and waited in my sock feet for whoever it was.

WILLIE FARGO came up the stairs. I knew him, had seen him around. He was a small-bore hustler for Nick Canalli. He was medium-sized, with a full, round face. His skin was oily. His hands were small, incredibly well kept.

I said: "Hello, Willie."

"Hi." Fargo snapped a look up and down the hall, pushed past me into the apartment.

"Come in, Willie—now that you're already in," I said, and closed the door.

"Never mind blowing," Fargo said. "I come to get them beans."

Suddenly he had a gun in his hand. The muzzle looked very black.

"I didn't know you were a torpedo, Willie. What beans?"

"Don't try to hand me a turkey!" he snarled. "I saw you give the cops the runaround, but it won't work on me."

His eyes were pin points of dirty glass and the gun was steady. He meant business.

"Okay. Okay. You can have 'em. But this is the first heist I ever saw pulled for a sack of beans."

"Just get 'em!"

He followed me into the kitchenette. The linoleum was cold on my feet. I opened the kitchen cabinet, took out a brown paper bag, hoping this stunt wouldn't end with my feet being even colder.

"I put 'em here," I told him, "because I like beans. They're good with ham."

"Cut the chatter."

He took the bag of beans, fingered it open with one hand, glanced inside. Satisfied, he warned: "If you're smart, guy, you'll clam."

"Don't mention it. What are a few beans between friends?"

When I had closed the door behind Fargo, I returned to the kitchenette. The beans I had given him were my own. I got out the original package.

The brown paper bag was dry now. I poured the beans out, pawed through them, looked into the sack, even broke a bean and tasted it. There was nothing mixed with the beans, nothing in the bag. So far as I could tell, they were ordinary Lima beans—the kind grocers sell for a few cents a pound.

I fished a couple of bottles of beer out of the refrigerator and sat down, my feet propped up on the chair rounds. Then I tried to figure the whole thing out, wondering just where the girl tied in.

The telephone rang before I finished one bottle. It was the girl. Her voice sounded almost as good over the wire as it had in the bus station

"Mr. Butler, did you find a package after I left?"

"Why?" I asked.

"Did you take it away with you?"

Again I asked: "Why?"

"Oh," she said, "you're going to be stubborn. I'll have to see you." The phone clicked.

I JIGGLED my hook, but she had hung up. I put my shoes on, finished my beer while I waited. This bean gag, whatever it was, seemed to be moving right along.

She was wearing a little dark green hat with a gay feather in it, and furs instead of the slicker, when I let her in. All in all, she made my apartment look suddenly messy.

I said: "You'll have to overlook untidiness. Bachelor quarters are never—"

But she wasn't interested. Her face was drawn, frightened.

She plunged in: "I'm Audrey McHale. I must have the package. It's mine."

Now, with the name, I remembered seeing her picture on the society page and in the roto sections.

I said: "Miss McHale, why are a few beans so important?"

"I can't tell you. I simply can't. Please, will you give them back to me?"

Pleading, she was hard to resist. But I told her: "One man has already been here for the same purpose—with a gun."

"I know. They told me."

"Who told you? Who are 'they'?"

She ignored the question. "You tricked him. That's why I had to come. They told me if I didn't persuade you to give them up—" Her voice trailed off.

I felt like the biggest heel ever made, but I said: "I won't give them to you."

Audrey McHale stared at me, her lower lip trembling.

I explained: "I think they're dangerous. At least one man is willing to kill to get them. Somehow they're im-

portant to somebody — somebody that's tough. I'm going to hang onto them until I find out why and who."

"But I've told you they're mine," Audrey McHale repeated, her anger rising.

"You can be killed as easily as anybody."

"Then you refuse?"

I hated to say it but I did. "Yes, I refuse."

With a stricken look, she turned to leave. I put my hand on her shoulder lightly.

"I'm sorry it has to be this way. Look, already I'd tear an arm off to help you. You can see that. If you'll tell me what it's about, give me a chance to—"

She shrugged my hand off her shoulder then and shoved a small pearl-handled automatic into my face, holding it high, inexpertly. The gun must have been concealed in her sleeve.

"Give me my property," she ordered. "Now!"

I slapped my palm over the gun and her hand, pushing out. The little gun popped once before I could shake her fingers loose, but no damage was done —at least, to nothing except a wall, and the plaster was falling anyhow.

"You shouldn't stand close when you try a stickup." I put the little automatic in my pocket.

"You—" Audrey McHale said furiously, and stamped her foot. "You—" Tears glistened in her eyes.

"Ah, kid, give me a chance to—"

But, without speaking, Audrey McHale went blindly to the door. I let her go. Her heels clicked downstairs.

THE girl wasn't listed in the telephone directory. But her father was. McHale, John V., 4490 Ingleside Drive. She would live there. I started to call a cab, then set the phone down. Four blocks over, at Monroe and Adams, was a cabstand. Since it had started to rain, I decided to walk there for a hack. Cruising cabs are scarce on a rainy night. I got my topcoat and the beans, and started.

But I walked no farther than half a block. Intending to take a short-cut, I swung into an alley. Between high buildings, the alley was dark. A few feet from the alley opening I stumbled over something.

I stooped and felt a body, flicked my cigarette lighter.

It was Willie Fargo, very dead. Someone had sent a bullet through his squirrel chin into his brain. He was not pretty. The bullet had been heavy caliber.

I was squatting on my heels, trying to see what I could find to give me a lead, when a flashlight snapped on in the mouth of the alley.

"Hold it or I'll shoot!"

I froze and the man advanced. I saw brass buttons behind the light.

"Okay, officer. I'm a reporter." I stood upright, slowly, with my hands in full view.

"What's this?" the cop asked.

I told him, but he held his service revolver on me while he blew his whistle. Another uniformed cop came, hurried back to a call-box at the corner.

Once or twice I tried to explain, staring into the light. But the dumb policeman refused to listen.

"Anything you say can be used against you."

His sidekick returned, patted me down, found the girl's little gun in my pocket.

"Ah," the first bull said, "you just stumbled onto him in the dark, eh?"

What could I say? Nothing. I said it. And we waited for the squad car.

It cut into the alley on two wheels and jerked to a stop. Its headlamps made the alley bright. Munson and his bunch piled out.

"For Pete's sake," I told him, "take these birds off me. I've been here a month, expecting a slug in the guts any minute."

Munson looked from Willie Fargo's corpse to me, examined the gun the policeman handed him, listened to their story.

"Put him in the car, boys," he said.

I argued. I argued to beat hell. But

I went to headquarters. By the time we got up to the detective bureau I was plenty hot. I jerked my arm loose from the dick who was leading me along, and turned on Munson.

"Listen, lieutenant. You know I didn't kill that little rat. You know I'm handing it straight when I say I stumbled on him *after* he'd been plugged!"

Munson's face was expressionless. "We'd better hold you anyhow."

"You do and the *Star'll* burn your pants off."

Either amusement or anger flickered in Munson's dark eyes a moment. "Yeah? And how'll you explain totin' a rod to your paper?"

III

THERE was commotion at the door then. Munson's dicks were trying to keep somebody out. Finally Nick Canalli thrust them aside and stalked in. One of the dicks made excuses to Munson with his eyes.

"Howdy, Mr. Canalli," Munson said, falsely cordial.

Nick Canalli was big, big and broad. He was husky enough to make me seem puny, and I stand six feet and weigh one-ninety. His lips were very red and his neck very plump. Canalli controlled rackets in the city—all of them. And his clothes showed it. His legitimate front was real estate and he had power plus.

"What's up?" he asked.

Munson told him: "Twice tonight we been called out to look at stiffs not cold yet. Butler, here, was on the spot both times. Patrolman Hallorhan found him bending over the last with a rod on him."

"So?" Canalli lifted his thick brows.

"So we're gonna hold him on suspicion of murder."

I said heatedly: "So you'll be sorry too—if you try it! When your ballistics man checks he'll find the slug in the corpse didn't come from the automatic. He'll find the guy who really killed Willie Fargo got away while you rode me."

I watched Nick Canalli. Not a flicker of expression crossed his poker pan. No one would have guessed he'd ever heard of Willie Fargo. Yet I knew Fargo had worked for him. I wondered just where Canalli came in on this, why he was here, questioning Munson.

"Maybe," Munson admitted. "But what about the dame in the bus depot?"

I said: "Ah, hell! Doc Peabody told you she died of heart disease."

"Suppose the autopsy proves different?" Munson shook his head. "No, I better hold you—just in case."

"You needn't worry. I'll be around after the autopsy—"

"You'll be around, all right," Munson promised, grinning.

I didn't like the way he said that. I reached for the telephone on his desk to holler for the *Star's* lawyers.

"No you don't!" Munson's grip on my wrist was strong.

I cocked a right to knock him loose, and Nick Canalli stepped between us, facing Munson.

"Now, now, lieutenant. Butler's okay. I know him."

So I was released—as easy as that. Canalli had batted for me, and Munson was afraid of his power.

"Oke. You go, Butler," Munson said. "But if you try to give us the runaround—"

I wondered why Fargo's boss—former boss, that is—should want me freed. But it didn't keep me from getting out of the detective bureau in a hurry.

The cops hadn't bothered with the beans when they frisked me. The bag bumped my hip as I descended worn wooden stairs, which smelled of dust and disinfectant, to the street.

I knew I'd be tailed, so I cut across two blocks to Market Street. To ditch a tail, you almost have to have crowds and traffic. They could be found in only one place this early in the morning. My watch said 2:17.

THE Municipal Market, opening for the day, was at its busiest hour. For a stretch of four blocks, truck motors coughed and rattled, horns honked, drivers and carters shouted, crates, baskets and barrels banged on the sidewalk. There was heat and confusion and excitement, as tons of produce were got ready to humor the appetite of a great city.

Walking rapidly, I joined the confusion. Halfway down, I ducked across to the other side of the market building, doubled back. A light truck, empty, pulled away from the curb. I grabbed the end gate, climbed on. I rode until I saw a cruising cab, whistled, hopped to the pavement.

"Ingleside Drive," I told the hackman. "Forty-four hundred block."

The McHale place was large, in a swell neighborhood along the lake shore. A stone wall shut the street outside. There were landscaped grounds, flower beds, and a tennis court off to one side. The house was wide and white, with striped awnings over the windows.

I didn't knock. I went in as if I owned the joint, cat-footed through waxed halls until I located the girl in the living room. She sat very still beside a phone. She looked as though she'd been there a long time. Her hands were clenched in her lap and she hadn't taken off her hat.

Not disturbing her, I tiptoed up wide stairs to the second floor. No one was in any of the rooms; the beds had not been turned down. I found a telephone in the hall and pulled up a chair.

I was already wishing I could smoke when the bell tinkled. The girl downstairs answered, and I lifted my receiver. I had guessed right; this was an extension.

"Yes?" The girl sounded breathless.

"Did you get 'em?"

The man at the other end of the wire talked peculiarly. His voice was naturally deep, but some tones were high, almost tenor. It was an unusual voice. I kept thinking I ought to recognize it.

The girl paused long, before she finally replied, struggling for control. "No."

"We warned you."

"Please," the girl begged. "Please, I'll give you money—"

"Hell, we don't want dough!"

"But the man—Butler—refuses to give me the beans. Isn't there anything else—"

"Listen," the man said slowly, grittingly. "Listen, we're not fooling. Either come across with those beans or we cool the old duck. Have 'em ready when I call again."

"How can I?" she wailed. "How can I?"

"That's your worry."

The girl steadied. "I'll get them somehow. I'll phone Mr. Butler immediately. Is father—"

"I'll call later," the man said and hung up.

I HAD the picture now, at least part of it, and I thought I remembered whose voice it was. I held the receiver until I heard the girl dialing.

"Hello?" I kept my voice low so it wouldn't echo down the stair well.

"Mr. Butler? This is Audrey McHale."

"Yes."

"I must persuade you to give me those beans. I must! I'll even tell you why, if necessary."

"Perhaps it won't be. I've learned a few things, and I want to talk to you. Suppose I bring them—"

"Thank you. Thank you." Her sigh of relief was audible. "It's 4490 Ingleside."

"I know," I said.

I sneaked down stairs, had a smoke in a blue roadster parked under a portico at the side of the McHale home, then went around to the front and rapped. Audrey McHale was waiting, glad to see me. I held the bean bag in my hand while I talked.

"First, Miss McHale, your father has been snatched—kidnaped. The kidnapers demand these beans as ransom."

"Yes." Her voice was near a whisper. "How did you know?"

"I work on a newspaper, so it's my job to find out things."

Her eyes widened with mistrust for a second.

I said quickly: "I'm here only to help you, though."

She searched my face, then said suddenly. "I believe you."

"Next," I said, "the kidnapers threaten to kill your father unless you turn the beans over to them."

She swallowed and nodded.

"Now, will you tell me what happened at the bus station and why this gang is so eager to get the beans?"

"It was terrible," she said. "Last night I received my father's cuff links and necktie in a package—nothing else, no explanation. It was delivered by a messenger. Immediately afterwards—"

"In uniform?"

"Yes. Immediately, someone phoned that father had been taken, that he'd be murdered if I told the police. They—he—ordered me to bring the beans and meet the woman . . . ."

I was listening to more explanation than I needed, but it was easier for the girl to start at the beginning. And the messenger might be a worthwhile lead. He could be traced. But I was betting that angle would lead no farther than Willie Fargo or the Withington woman. And they were both dead.

IV

"IT WAS terrible," Audrey McHale repeated. "The woman was waiting. Just as I started to deliver the beans, she held her hand to her side and moaned. Then she fell. I was dreadfully frightened. I had never seen anyone die before. I shook her, tried to speak to her. Then I forgot about everything except getting away."

"And you bumped into me, leaving the beans behind," I said.

"Yes, I suppose so. I forgot them because I was afraid."

That was that. Myra Withington had been merely a clay pigeon, to make the contact and take the beef, if there was one. She probably hadn't even been in the know. Somebody, Willie Fargo perhaps, had covered her while she took the big risk. Only her heart had been rotten. It had stopped at the wrong moment and gummed the works for the mob.

"Now tell me why the beans are valuable."

The girl said: "I don't know."

"Haven't you any idea at all? Where did they come from?"

She shook her head. "Father brought them home day before yesterday. He seemed delighted about something, but he didn't explain."

"Not even one word?"

The girl shook her head again, and I was up against a blank wall. I knew that a prominent bigwig had been snatched, his daughter threatened. I knew that a sack of beans was the ransom price. I thought I knew who was behind the deal. But a helluva lot of good any of this did me, for none of it was evidence.

I heard someone in the hall, looked toward the girl.

She shook her head, whispered: "I don't know."

By the time I reached the hallway, Munson and one of his dicks were crossing it. They held pistols in their hands.

"What's the idea, Munson?"

The girl peeped over my shoulder, gasped.

"It's all right," I told her. "They're plain-clothes policemen." Then I waited for Munson's explanation.

"I know somethin's up tonight, Butler," he said. "You're in on it. We're here to be in on it, too."

"How'd you follow me here?"

"We didn't. We followed the mugs that was followin' you. When you covered at the market, they headed this way, actin' as if they knew where to find you. The two of 'em are in a

jallopy across the street." He caught my expression, added: "Ah, they never got wise we was tailin' 'em, never seen us come in."

I said: "Sorry, Munson, but your foot's in it this time. I'm merely making a personal call on Miss McHale."

Munson snorted. "Yeah, I know. In a pig's eye!"

Audrey McHale stepped out from behind me. Her cheeks were flushed. "Please leave my home at once!"

Munson said: "Just a minute, miss. Just a minute—"

I asked: "Have you a warrant, lieutenant? If you haven't, Miss McHale has the right to order you to leave."

"Get out!" the girl ordered.

Munson's little black eyes glittered. "It's your funeral," he muttered, as he stamped out. His man followed.

Gunfire sounded in the street a few seconds later.

"Damn," I told the girl, "I'll have to see what it is."

I went across the lawn, running. I almost knew what to expect. Munson and his pal had tackled the two men in the car, of course.

WHEN I reached the street two autos were burning the pavement, a siren wailing keenly from the hindmost. Munson's dick was lying in the gutter in a puddle of blood. He had been a lean guy with a sour face. Death had caused his face to become more sour.

The dick's service revolver lay near his hand. I picked it up, dragged him up on the sidewalk out of the gutter. That was the least I could do.

When I got back inside, the house was empty, totally empty. The girl and the sack of beans were gone from the living room. I ran through other rooms, shouting, then thought to look out a rear window.

Three men were dragging Audrey McHale through flower beds toward the lake. She was kicking and struggling, trying to scream around the hand one held over her mouth. One, a tall mug, carried the bag of beans.

I broke for the tennis court, running hard. Dawn was growing in the east; but the tennis court backstops were vine-covered. By keeping them between me and the group, I could head them off without being seen.

I rounded a backstop and rested a minute, panting. The dead detective's .38 was long-barreled, well-balanced. Three cartridges remained in its chambers.

When the struggling group came within thirty paces, I used one shell to wing the bean-toter. He squealed in surprise, dropped the bag, and scuttled off through the shrubbery, bent low.

I yelled: "Surround them, men!"

The other thugs halted, glancing from side to side as they reached for rods. I couldn't fire at either without endangering the girl, so I sent my last two bullets over their heads and charged.

My shoulder banged against the hip of the man on the right and he went down. I struck at his head with the pistol barrel, hit his shoulder. His sidekick smashed a fist into my mouth and I sprawled on dew-wet grass. Then they dodged for cover. Neither had been able to reach his gun, which was pure luck for me.

I scooped up the bean sack. The brown paper was getting a bit shopworn by now. The girl and I returned to the house.

The kidnap contact phoned almost at once.

"Yes," the girl said. "Yes, I have them."

The voice of the man at the other end crackled through the receiver.

"Oh, no," Audrey McHale said. "We didn't call in the police. They simply came—"

"Let me talk to him," I said. I took the phone. "This is Morgan Butler, the man who found the beans. Miss McHale is ready to turn them over to you. And she didn't holler for the cops."

"No?"

"No. I had a little trouble with the

police on my way over here. The dicks put a tail on me. I lost them. Then a couple of your dumb hoodlums led the law right to the place. That's where the cops came in—they followed your men who were tailing me."

I could hear the guy swearing.

I SAID: "That isn't the saddest part. Your mobsters killed a dick out here and tried to snatch Miss McHale. Both times there was shooting. This job is getting hot."

"The hell you say!"

"Exactly. The law'll probably be back any minute. You'd better give her a chance to deliver before it's too late. She's tried to meet you halfway all night, and you and your dim-wits have done nothing except cross her up."

"So what?"

"So you must have some organization," I needled him. "You bumped Willie Fargo because he muffed a play. And then you let the rest of your mob run around killing cops and shooting up the finest district in town. How long do you think you can get away with it?"

"Okay," the voice said, and I knew I had scored with my guess about how Willie Fargo had died. "That's enough. Have the dame bring the beans to the corner of Park and Russell. A man in a checkered cap'll be waiting."

I said: "I know where it is. I'll drive her."

"Like hell you will. She'll come alone."

"Ah—" I began, but he cut me short.

"Alone, I say."

"You'll release her father as soon as you have the beans?" The question was intended to keep him talking. I wanted to be doubly sure about that voice.

"Yeah. Yeah. Right away."

"Look. I'm curious. Just why is a bag of Lima beans worth a kidnaping rap? The Federal Bureau—"

"Nobody'll take a fall on this job!"

"Don't be too sure. They always trip crooks sooner or later."

"A man will be at Park and Russell," the voice said with finality. Then it added an afterthought: "The lug's only a setup. If you knock him over, you won't get anybody."

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and as a result of that little talk with God a strange Power came into my life. After 42 years of horrible, dismal, sickening failure, everything took on a brighter hue. It's fascinating to talk with God, and it can be done very easily once you learn the secret. And when you do — well — there will come into your life the same dynamic Power which came into mine. The shackles of defeat which bound me for years went a-shimmering — and now—?—well, I own control of the largest daily newspaper in our County, I own the largest office building in our City I drive a beautiful Cadillac limousine. I own my own home which has a lovely pipe-organ in it, and my family are abundantly provided for after I'm gone. And all this has been made possible because one day, ten years ago, I actually and literally talked with God.

You, too, may experience that strange mystical Power which comes from talking with God, and when you do, if there is poverty, unrest, unhappiness, or ill-health in your life, well — this same God-Power is able to do for you what it did for me No matter how useless or helpless your life seems to be—all this can be changed. For this is not a human Power I'm talking about—it's a God-Power And there can be no limitations to the God-Power can there? Of course not. You probably would like to know how you, too, may talk with God, so that this same Power which brought me these good things might come into your life, too. Well—just write a letter or a post-card to Dr Frank B. Robinson, Dept. 999, Moscow, Idaho, and full particulars of this strange Teaching will be sent to you free of charge. But write now—while you are in the mood. It only costs one cent to find out, and this might easily be the most profitable one cent you have ever spent. It may sound unbelievable—but it's true, or I wouldn't tell you it was.—Advt. Copyright, 1939, Frank B. Robinson.

"I know," I said. "You win."

Audrey McHale's coat was tight across my shoulders and the hat I selected came down over my ears. But the coat had a fur collar and the hat a wide floppy brim and a ribbon tie. I'd pass, even if I did feel foolish in the getup. Her blue roadster would help.

Park and Russell was way out on the east side in a thinly populated section. There were subdivisions, bare of homes, and real estate signs and white corner markers and field office shacks standing lonesome here and there, but little else. A few one- and two-story buildings clustered at the intersection of Park and Russell.

A sign on a two-story building a short distance from the corner read:

HONEYSUCKLE HILLS
Lots, Homes, Choice Business Plots
EASY PAYMENTS

When I spotted the sign, I knew my guess about the voice was solid.

A small, thin guy wearing a black-and-gray checked cap stood before a sleepy joint that looked like a combination pool room, delicatessen and beer stube. It was not open. His face was pinched, his nostrils hairy. He stepped quickly to the curb when I pulled up.

Keeping my head down, I fumbled at the sack, stalling until I saw a car coming. I had an idea.

"Come on, floosie," the mug said in nervously hoarse tones. "Gimme!"

I pretended to drop the bag, caught it clumsily. The auto drew nearer. I placed the bag in the man's outstretched hand. He snatched it, darted toward an opening between buildings.

V

GUNNING the motor, I swung out and backed into Russell, like I was turning to go back the way I had come. As the auto passed on Park, I clashed my gears, then let the engine roar with the clutch pedal down. I shut off the ignition quickly, hoping the gag would hold for a while anyhow. If they didn't look too closely, the passing car might be taken for the roadster.

Checked-cap was being let in the rear door of the real estate building, when I reached the alley behind the pool hall. The door closed behind him. I hurried to it, tried the knob cautiously, but the door was bolted. I looked up at the building, saw no possible way of entering.

Shedding the girl's coat and hat, I stepped around to the side. Almost instantly, I heard the bolt pulled inside, and pressed against the wall. Someone came out and the door shut. I peeped around my corner.

It was one of the men who had tried to snatch Audrey McHale. I recognized him by his walk. He was following a faint path across lots. The path apparently ended at one of the field office shacks a block or two away.

Then, before I could make up my mind to follow him or remain crouched against the wall, somebody inside began bellowing. The door burst open and the mob poured out into the alley. I wasn't surprised to see Nick Canalli in the lead. His voice was the one I had recognized.

"Hey, China," Canalli yelled. "Come back. Bobo says the dame didn't drive off. She's still around somewhere."

Canalli cursed until the man returned, then barked: "Two of you find her car and cover it. The rest spread out and find her. She can't be far away!"

He began cursing again. I heard the hoodlums starting their search, kept my head away from the corner and tried to push the brick wall over.

But it wasn't my day.

A broad mug with green eyes and no forehead popped around the building, running smack into me. I socked him with all I had and stepped on his stomach as I went over him, sprinting for open fields.

That didn't pan out, either. There were five of them, counting Canalli

and leaving out the two who guarded the roadster. They spread out behind me, yelping like a bunch of kids hare-and-hounding. They didn't use rods. After what had already happened, I guess Canalli had had something to say about fireworks being out of order.

But the mob didn't need guns. They simply ran me down by keeping after me and heading me off everywhere I turned. Two tackled me finally and held me until the others could come up and help drag me into the real estate office.

THEY dumped me on the floor. I got to my feet, wiped the sweat from my face. There was a desk and wicker chairs in the room and plate-glass windows faced the street, but the windows were blanked by cream-painted sun blinds. The damned beans were on the desk.

I said: "I told you that crooks always get caught, Canalli."

He grinned. "You're the one that's caught."

"But not for long. Soon's I write this yarn you'll go to the can for plenty years."

"You're not gonna write anything, big-brain!"

"No?"

"No!"

His voice was matter-of-fact, but his expression wasn't. He advanced. I retreated. I was still panting from the foot-race. So was he. He kept coming.

I put a hand out, as though I braced myself on a back of a wicker chair. When I had a good grip, I lifted the chair and tried to brain Canalli with it. His men sprang in, though, grasping at my arms, and I couldn't bring the chair down. So I did the next best thing.

With my arms above my head, I tossed the chair at a plate-glass window. Glass tinkled and Canalli closed in. I met him as best I could, a gangster pinning each arm. His huge fingers closed on my throat in a strangling grip.

Red and blue balls of fire were dancing before my eyes. And my back was arched over the desk until it was near breaking, when Lieutenant Munson poked a pistol against Canalli's ear.

"Leggo, Canalli, or you're dead," he growled.

I straightened, rubbing my neck. The room was suddenly full of cops, in and out of uniform. The hoodlums were in a corner, their paws high.

Audrey McHale stood before me, clenching and unclenching her hands. She was saying: "They haven't hurt you? They haven't hurt you? If they've hurt you, I'll—"

I said: "I'm all right—now."

Munson said: "Miss McHale brought us to the corner, but you busted that window just in time to let us know where to find you."

"I'm betting you'll find McHale tied up in a shack across lots a piece," I told him. "There's a path. I saw one of these lugs start that way after I brought the beans—either to turn McHale loose or to kill him."

"I was gonna let 'im go," the hoodlum whimpered. "Honest, I was."

"That probably means he intended to kill him," I said.

Two of the cops left to frisk the shack.

Munson said: "I'm sorry about treatin' you rough, Morg. You've fixed this bum—" he gestured toward Canalli with his pistol—"so he can't order cops around no more."

"It's okay, lieutenant."

"I've been wantin' to get him for years."

"Everybody has, I guess."

The cops returned with Audrey McHale's father between them. He walked stiffly, as though he had been bound a long time, and bits of adhesive tape clung to his cheeks where he had worn a gag.

JOHN V. McHALE was white-haired, dignified. His white mustache was neat and the flesh of his face looked pink and healthy, despite a two-day stubble of gray whiskers. I waited while Audrey, crying a little, embraced him.

"Tell me, Mr. McHale," I asked, "why Canalli was eager to get a bag of Lima beans. Why are they valuable?"

McHale smiled. "It's really very simple."

"Simple?"

"Yes." He picked up the bag, balanced it on his palm. "You see, these are the only beans of this particular kind in the world."

My mouth must have sprung open, for McHale continued: "They're seeds of a heretofore unheard of variety. They will grow on low bushes—and ordinary Lima beans must be trained on poles, you know."

I didn't know, but I nodded.

"These beans," McHale explained further, "are freaks. More than a million and a half plants were grown in Mexico. Of the lot, only four plants were of this type. Their yield was auctioned. I'm an importer, therefore I bid them in—perhaps beat Canalli to them. I planned to give them to anyone who would promise to distribute the first three crops for seed. Canalli didn't want that."

I said: "I still can't see why Canalli should be interested."

"He, if he had secured the beans, would have had an absolute monopoly. He could have demanded any price—even as much as a dollar a bean—for seeds of the new variety during the next four or five years. It takes that long for growers to produce a stock of bean seeds."

I didn't know much about the bean market. But I did know that every basket, every crate and barrel, of produce I had seen at the Municipal Market this morning meant a cut for Canalli.

I said: "I see."

Lieutenant Munson grunted: "The greedy louse. He wasn't satisfied with having every racket in the county sewed up. He had to go after a new one in seeds!"

Audrey McHale was smiling when I turned to her. Little bands of sunshine coming through cracks in the sun blinds barred her pretty face and made her curly hair shine.

"Mr. Butler—" she began.

"Morgan, to you," I said.

"All right, then," she said, the sun striking her even teeth as her smile widened. "Morgan. I'll accept your invitation now. Better, *I'll* buy *you* a drink."

We went down to the joint at the corner, and I kicked on the door until the greasy proprietor got out of bed and opened up. He probably wouldn't have anything fit to drink in such a dive. But I didn't care—I didn't care at all.

Daggers of Doom

When Detective Gil Fenton pocketed five grand to take on the jade collector's case, little did he think that he was toting crimson currency.

By

Marty Lyle

THE body of the dead Chinaman was the first thing that Gil Fenton saw when he came into the library of the wealthy Stephen Wayne. Next to the Chinaman was another lumpy form.

The man from the medical examiner's office was just starting to work on the body of the little yellow man. He was not pleasant to look at; he had been shot through the head, and the bullet had come out in back.

Gil turned an inquiring glance at the others.

Stacy, of homicide, was sitting in a straight-backed chair and talking confidentially to Stephen Wayne. Wayne, the well-known collector of jade, seemed to be all broken up.

Not so, Stacy. The homicide man was smoking one of Wayne's expensive cigars with evident relish.

His trousers were pulled up at the knees, and the cuffs were an inch or so above the tops of his purple socks, which he wore without garters. He glanced away from Wayne. His self-satisfied look changed to a sulky frown when the man-servant preceded Gil Fenton across the room, taking care to give the bodies a wide berth.

The servant announced to the jade collector: "Mr. Fenton, sir."

Wayne pulled himself together. He arose with a word of apology to the homicide man and offered his hand to Gil.

Gil shook hands with him, then said to the police detective: "Hello, Stacy. How's tricks?"

Stacy scowled. "Pretty good till you showed up. Anybody send for you, or did you just smell trouble?"

Wayne smiled apologetically at Stacy. "Sorry, I've been so upset I forget to mention it before. I thought it best to hire a private detective as a bodyguard. These Orientals, you know—"

"Sure, sure," Stacy growled. "It's your privilege, Mr. Wayne."

Gil said: "I didn't understand that you only wanted a bodyguard. I could have assigned one of my men for twenty-five a day. I don't usually—"

Wayne interrupted. "I know, Mr. Fenton. But I don't want an ordinary operative. I know you're worth more than that yourself—but I'm ready to pay it. You can write your own ticket."

Gil shrugged. "All right, if that's the way you feel about it." He glanced across at the bodies. "Who did all the shooting?"

Wayne said nervously: "I did." He pointed to an open wall safe. "I got back earlier than usual tonight, and found the Chinaman at the safe. He had stabbed Krell." Wayne closed his eyes hard as a surge of emotion swept over him.

He indicated the body under the sheet, next to the Chinaman. "That's Krell. He was my secretary. Been with me for five years. Just got married—and he has to be stabbed to death protecting my jade collection from a common thief!"

The collector turned back to Gil, his chin quivering. "That Chinaman must have had the combination, because the safe was opened the way it is now. When I surprised him, he came at me with a knife—the same knife he killed Krell with. Luckily, I was armed, and I shot him."

Stacy got out of his chair. "Everything checks," he told Gil. "There's the knife on the table. The Chink's prints are on the safe. I called downtown, and Inspector Glenn said it wouldn't be necessary to bring Mr. Wayne down now. It's a plain case of robbery and murder."

Gil said: "So what am I supposed to do around here? What're you afraid of, Mr. Wayne?"

The tall jade collector was looking at the body of the yellow man with somber eyes. "I'm afraid there may be reprisals. These Chinese—"

GIL walked over to the body. The medical examiner was through, and was making out a report. On the dead man's middle finger was a wide gold band. Gil bent and saw that there was an inscription in Chinese characters etched in the gold. He could read the hieroglyphics almost as well as he could read English. He had spent many eventful years in the East. That particular inscription he had seen often before. Translated, it meant roughly: "Respect the gods, but have as little as possible to do with them."

Gil arose from the body, and faced Wayne. "Did the Chink get anything out of the safe."

Wayne nodded. He produced two pieces of jade from his pocket. Each piece was five and a half inches long. There were jagged edges on one side of each. Gil took them from Wayne, and fitted them together. The jagged edges fell into place, the two pieces became as one, forming a little icon,

or image, representing a man squatted upon a low pedestal.

Across the front of the pedestal was engraved the same inscription as on the dead man's ring!

Wayne was saying: "That's a figure of Confucius, carved in nephritic jade. The workmanship is consummate; the piece is perhaps two thousand years old. It is absolutely impossible to estimate its value in dollars. I wouldn't sell it for a million."

Stacy took the cigar out of his mouth to say: 'The Chink had both pieces in his pocket. That's all he was after."

There was a thoughtful expression in Gil's eyes as he handed the image back to Wayne. "Looks to me," he said, "like you'll need more than protection—you'll need life insurance. This image comes from a shrine of Kung Fu-tsu, which is the Chinese equivalent of Confucius. The shrines of Kung Fu-tsu are under the special protection of the Kung Tong, and the dead Chinaman there is a member of it." He shook his head. "No thanks, Mr. Wayne. I can't take the assignment. When those boys have it in for you, it's just too bad."

Stacy said sneeringly: "Just yella, huh?"

Gil glared, was about to say something nasty, when Wayne interrupted hastily. "Look here, Fenton. From what I've heard of you, you're not the man to turn down a job because it's dangerous. That's why I called you in. I want to keep this jade, and I also want to stay alive. I'll pay you five thousand dollars to fix it so I don't have to worry about this Kung Tong any more—and I don't care how you do it!"

Gil considered for a moment. Then he said: "They may want indemnity —for him." He nodded toward the body.

"I'll pay it—whatever they ask. And the fee to you for arranging it."

"All right," Gil agreed. "You keep to the house—don't go out till I see what's what. I'll send a couple of my men over to take care of you in case these boys start something prematurely."

Wayne said: "You want a check?"

Gil nodded. "In advance. I don't guarantee results, and I'd hate to have to sue your estate for it."

Wayne made a wry face, but he sat down and wrote the check.

Gil took it, grinned at Stacy, and went out.

In the street he hailed a cab, and said: "Corner of Race and Marley."

WHEN Gil got out of the cab he walked down a half block. He stood for a moment, looking up at the bleak brownstone facade of the house on Marley Street.

He made sure that his .32 Special slid easy in the holster beneath his armpit. Then he walked up the five steps of the stoop, and rang the bell.

Almost before he had his finger off the button, the door was opened by a short, skinny Chinaman. When the man saw Gil, he bobbed his head and said squeakily: "Hello, Misteh Fenton. Come lite in. Charley Mee waits for you."

Gil said nothing, but his eye went to the gold band on the middle finger of the Chinaman's right hand. It was the same kind of ring that the dead Chinaman in Wayne's living room had worn.

Gil stepped into the dark hallway, and the servant closed the door. Then he turned and led the way toward the rear, saying: "Please to follow me, Misteh Fenton."

Gil thought he detected a subtle gleam in the skinny Chinaman's eye. But he had long ago learned the futility of trying to read any sort of meaning into the expression of a Chinaman's face. He went along behind the servant till they reached a massive oak door at the end of the corridor.

The servant rapped in a peculiar way—twice, then once, then three times very swiftly. Almost at once

there was a click, and the heavy door started to swing open.

The room within was only dimly lighted by a single low lamp that stood near the door.

In the middle of the room was a long table. There were chairs around this table, but none was occupied except the one at the head, facing the door. In this chair sat a very fat motionless Chinaman.

Gil stepped into the room, and the door closed mechanically, leaving the skinny servant on the outside. Gil noted that the fat man was manipulating a row of buttons on the table. These, doubtless, controlled the door —also, perhaps, various other gadgets in the room.

Gil walked up to the end of the table opposite, the fat man, and said: "Hello, Charlie. How did you know I was coming?"

The fat man spoke impassivly. His countenance, which was almost entirely in shade, hardly seemed to move, except for his lips. His English was as good as Gil's, with the exception of a slight lisp.

"This poor offspring of a snail," he said, "is overwhelmed with humiliation that he cannot rise to fittingly greet the eminent Mister Fenton. But the disabilities of old age weigh heavily upon me. I—"

"Can it, Charlie," Gil interrupted him, unceremoniously. "I know you're a fraud, so why waste all the words on me? How did you know I was coming?"

Charlie Mee did not move. His voice took on an edge of sharpness. "You are the same old Gil Fenton —always getting to the point. What difference does it make how I knew? You are here. You have something to say?"

Gil nodded. He put both hands on the table, leaned forward. "I have, Charlie. And this is it. You're the head of the Kung Tong. I know it, because I learned it once when I did you a service. I was well paid for that service, and we are quits. I ask nothing for that. But I have come to offer you something."

Charlie Mee said nothing, did not move. He waited in silence, the epitome of the patient Oriental.

Gil went on after a moment: "Today, one of your brotherhood broke into the home of Stephen Wayne, the jade collector. He stabbed Wayne's secretary to death, and attempted to steal a jade figure of Kung Fu-tsu. Wayne surprised him, and when this member of your tong attempted to attack, Wayne shot him in the head."

Still the fat man maintained silence. Only his eyes were now glittering dangerously.

Gil continued: "Wayne was justified in shooting your tong member. But he's afraid the tong may be out for blood—so he's engaged me to keep his skin whole. I have taken his money, therefore it follows that I must fight his enemies. I should be very sorry if you felt that you had to avenge this member of yours who killed Wayne's secretary."

Gil stopped. He had made his position clear.

For a long time Charlie Mee gazed at him impassively down the length of the bare table. Gil wondered what devious thoughts were going through that Oriental mind.

Finally Charlie Mee stirred and spoke. "The laws of the tong forbid me to speak freely to one of an alien race, Mister Fenton. But I am sorry that you have taken this man Wayne's money. For it is written that Wayne must die—and you must fail in your task. Let me give you a warning—return this money and wash your hands of it. There is safety for you in that course. Otherwise, much as I regret to say it, death waits for you, as well as for him."

"You don't understand," said Gil. "Wayne is willing to pay a cash indemnity to satisfy the tong. You can practically name your own price."

Charlie Mee answered him, speaking very slowly: "There is no in-

demnity, Mister Fenton, that will satisfy the Kung Tong. Wayne's life is forfeit. We will purchase the jade image from his estate."

GIL took his hands off the table and stood up straight. His hands hung loosely at his sides, and he nudged the armpit holster a trifle forward with his left arm.

"Then it must be a war between us, Charlie. You know I never back out of a job."

The fat man nodded. "I know that, Mister Fenton, and that is why I took precautions when I learned that Wayne had sent for you. I knew that you would come here first, for you are a straightforward man, a worthy opponent. But you are beaten, Wayne is beaten. It is regrettable that you, whom I truly admire, must go down to destruction with your client."

Gil smiled crookedly. "All right, Charlie, we understand each other fine—you love me, and I love you—like brothers. In fact we love each other so much we're gonna have a little private war."

The fat Chinaman nodded. "Reluctantly, I agree with you. It is war!" He leaned forward a little, his eyes staring opaquely along the table.

"When," Gil asked, "does this war start—when I leave your house?"

Charlie Mee's fat lips twisted into a smile. "I am so sorry, Mister Fenton. The war must begin—now! Even though you are a guest in this poor house of mine, I cannot afford to allow you to leave it alive. You are the only white man who knows of this house. Now that you are an enemy, you must die!"

Gil scowled. His hand flashed to his armpit holster, but stopped when Charlie Mee rapped out an imperative, "Wait!"

The fat man raised a forefinger on which the elongated fingernail tapered to a clawlike point. He indicated a section of the wall at Gil's right.

"I told you," he went on, "that I had taken precautions."

Gil, standing rigid, his hand within an inch of the gun butt, flicked his eyes to the right, and started.

There was a panel in the wall which must have opened soundlessly. Framed in the opening, knelt a rawboned, high-cheeked hatchet-man. He was dressed in black, with a black skull cap. Beady eyes were sighted along the barrel of a Browning rapid-firer which was trained unswervingly on Gil's middle! A yellow hand fingered the lever tautly.

Gil swung his eyes back to the fat man. He still kept his right hand taut, and spoke through thin lips. "It won't do, Charlie. Your playmate will get me, all right, but I'll crease you, too, for sure. You know I can do it—right through the heart."

Charlie Mee smiled. "Indeed, you are renowned for your skill with a gun. But I have anticipated that, too. These buttons on the table are not the only ones. My feet—"

Even as he spoke, his feet moved, and a sheet of steel shot up from what had looked like a groove in the table. The steel snapped up to a height of about four feet, effectively screening the fat man from Gil's view.

At the same time, from behind the barrier, Charlie Mee uttered a short string of commands in Cantonese.

Gil rolled away from the table, his hand snaking out the gun. At the same moment the Browning in the hands of the hatchet-man began to spit flame and to chatter wickedly in the semi-gloom.

Gil heard the wicked *spat* of the slugs tearing into the floor just beyond the spot where he had been. If the rawboned Chinaman had been more adept at handling the quick-firer, he could have raked the room and torn Gil to pieces. As it was, though, he kept his finger on the trip, and exhausted the entire drum before he could shift.

The hatchet-man didn't realize his

ammunition was out, and finally got the Browning around so that it bore on Gil. But it no longer spouted lead. He looked down at it with an expression of puzzlement.

The quiet in the room after the smashing chatter of the gun was oppressive.

Gil was on his knees on the floor. The hatchet-man raised his head in sudden panic as understanding came to him that he was without ammunition. He dropped the rapid-firer, and his hand darted to his sleeve, came out with a glittering, curved knife. But Gil was on his feet, grinning.

He darted quickly across the room, and brought the barrel of his gun down on the Chinaman's skull. Yellow skin cracked, and the hatchet-man dumped forward on the floor, face down on the Browning, the knife still clutched in convulsive fingers.

Gil swung around, stepped toward the far end of the long table where Charlie Mee had been. Charlie Mee was no longer there!

He had evidently slipped out through another panel when the shooting started.

Gil came back to the open panel. The hatchet-man lay across the opening, and the panel, which had started to close, had stopped its motion when it hit him.

Gil stepped through and found himself in a long, dark corridor. The walls were of some sort of metal, lined with asbestos. Sound-proof. Which accounted for the absence of police after the shooting.

The dim light from the room behind left the far part of the corridor in blackness. Gil went along slowly, gun at his hip, left hand feeling the wall.

Suddenly, up ahead, a door in the left side of the corridor opened. A shaft of weak light illumined a form that leaped into the corridor. The door was closed.

Gil knew that he was outlined by the light behind him for the benefit of whoever had come into the narrow corridor. Instinctively he crouched, just as a gleaming knife flashed through the air above him. The knife caromed against the partly closed panel behind and clattered on the floor.

Its tinkling clatter was only an echo, though, of Gil's heavy gun roaring in the darkness. He shot three times toward the one who had thrown the knife, and then lay flat on the floor for a moment. At first there was no sound from up ahead, then a slight shuffling noise, and a groan.

GIL ran forward, getting out his flashlight. The man he had shot lay half reclining against the wall. He was small, yellow, with deep sunken eyes—another hatchet-man. Three distinct bubbles of blood spurted from his chest. Gil's shooting had been perfect.

Gil threw the light in the Chinaman's face, and even as he did so, the man's eyes glazed and there was a death rattle in his throat.

Gil's back was to the door from which the hatchet-man had come, and he hastened to rectify that by hurrying away down the corridor. He glanced back at intervals, expecting the panel to open again, but it didn't. At last he reached the end of the corridor, and felt a door knob.

He turned, and found the door locked. Gil wasted no time putting a bullet right smash into the lock between the jamb and the door. He tried the knob again, and the door swung free. Gil stepped out into the night and found himself in a back yard.

There was a litter of garbage cans around, and he started to make his way through them. He heard a window creaking open in the house above him. If he were spotted now, he could be picked off with ease. He looked about for cover. His hand rested on one of the garbage cans, and he saw that it was empty. Just as the window

came up, he vaulted into the can and ducked his head.

From his retreat he heard Charlie Mee say in Cantonese: "Do not shoot. It is not desirable to attract attention to ourselves at this time. Go down into the yard and search. He has not had time to escape from there."

A moment later a voice from down in the yard near the door called out, also in Cantonese: "He has come through here, master. The lock is shot away!"

Charlie Mee ordered: "Search the yard carefully, then. Look in all the trash cans. Do not let him escape!"

Feet scurried in the yard. Gil held his gun steady, barrel pointing up toward the sky. He could see a single star above him, and a slowly moving cloud that was moving up to obscure the star.

Suddenly a gaunt yellow face hid the star and the cloud from his view. The face started to shout, and Gil fired. The face disintegrated, and Gil jumped straight up, put a foot on the edge of the can, and vaulted over.

A chorus of shrill yells came from various parts of the yard. Flashlight beams flitted about. Gil stepped over the body of the Chinaman who lay alongside the garbage can, and darted across the yard.

From the window above, Charlie Mee shouted in shrill singsong dialect: "Shoot! Shoot now! He must not escape!"

Gil swung his gun up and took a potshot at the sound of Charlie's voice. Gil knew that he had not hit him, for wood splintered the framework of the window up there.

Lead winged past him, a slug tore at his sleeve. But the Chinese are notoriously poor shots, and Gil reached the fence unwounded. A dark shape hurtled at him, and Gil straight-armed that shape with the hand that held the gun. The shape uttered a pained yelp, and collapsed.

Gil hoisted himself up on a garbage can alongside the fence and jumped. Shouts rose to a tumultuous crescendo behind him; a gun barked from the window above. Just at that moment Gil's foot caught on a projecting nail as he was clearing the fence. His arms went out wildly into the air, and he hurtled over into the next yard. He landed heavily on concrete, the breath knocked out of him for the second.

He heard one of the Chinese in the next yard call out: "He is killed, master. Your aim was true!"

Charlie Mee replied from above in his unhurried voice: "Come up, then, quickly. Leave his body. We must abandon this house before the police come."

Gil got up and felt about for his gun which he had dropped when he fell. He picked it up, and sped away through the yard, down an alley.

Gil saw the back of a policeman who was just turning the corner on the run from Race into Marley. He walked away rapidly in the opposite direction from the cop.

At the corner of Claremont Avenue Gil hailed a cab and gave the address of Wayne's home. Just as the cab got under way, a police radio car tore down Claremont and rounded into Race, with siren shrieking.

The driver called back through the open sliding window: "Must be another shooting. The way these cops ride, you'd think there wasn't nobody on the streets but them!"

Gil didn't answer; he was busy loading his gun.

A LITTLE surprise was waiting for him in front of Wayne's house. There was a police radio car at the curb, a headquarters car, and an ambulance. A small crowd was being held back from in front of the entrance by a couple of bluecoats.

One of the cops stopped Gil as he shoved his way to the front row of the crowd.

"What's happened?" Gil demanded of the cop.

The uniformed man didn't vouchsafe him any response, but pushed

him back into the crowd. Gil lunged, shoved the cop out of the way, and sprang up the steps of the house.

The policeman roared, "Hey you!" and leaped after him.

Gil gained the entrance. He bumped into a giant of a man in plain clothes who was just coming out.

Gil gripped the man's sleeve, panted, "H'ya, Glenn? Tell this flat-foot I'm okay, will you? He wouldn't listen to me!"

Inspector Glenn scowled at Gil, and grudgingly said to the cop: "It's all right. Get back there and hold that crowd."

Then the inspector took Gil by the arm and urged him into the house. "You're just the baby I been looking for, Fenton. There's something smells in this whole business, and you're the smart boy that knows all the answers!"

"Sure," said Gil. "I know all the answers. Any time you're stuck, just ask me. Only suppose you tell me what's happened around here?"

Glenn looked down from the height of his six feet two to Gil's measly five feet ten, and said: "Nothing's happened. Nothing—at—all!"

He piloted Gil into the living room, and Gil gasped. The living room looked like a temporary field hospital. Stacy lay stretched on the sofa, groaning, while a white-coated interne wrapped a bandage around his head.

Sloan, one of Gil's operatives, sat in the easy chair while another interne taped his arm. The body of the Chinaman whom Wayne had killed was still on the floor next to that of Krell, the secretary. Both were covered now.

Gil's other operative, Joe Baird, was standing by the couch trying to help the interne bandage Stacy's head. Joe Baird had his right trouser leg rolled up above his knee, and his leg was plastered up with gauze and adhesive tape.

Inspector Glenn let go of Gil's arm and said: "Well?"

Gil said: "What was it, Joe, a raid?"

Joe Baird turned from the couch and grinned sheepishly. "Just that, boss. The Chinks took us unawares. I was in here with Wayne, and Sloan was outside at the door. Stacy, here, was keeping Wayne and me company until the morgue wagon came for the stiffs."

"So what happened?" Gil asked impatiently.

"So the first thing," Baird went on, "we heard a battling around at the outside door, and a shot. So I get up to take a look-see. Just at that minute three wild Chinks bust in here with a sawed-off shotgun, and let fly without a single word. It got us all except Wayne who was sitting in that chair over there, out of range. Then when I was on the floor with this stuff in my leg, I tried to go for my gun, and one of the Chinks covered me. So I had to lay there while they dragged Wayne out."

Gil's eyes were smoldering. "Nice!" he grunted. "Fine protection we gave Wayne! What happened to him?"

Glenn coughed. "They took him away in a delivery truck marked, 'Fancy Groceries.' There was an alarm out for the truck inside of five minutes, but it did no good. We found the truck down on the West Side, abandoned. They must have switched to another car."

Gil asked: "Did Wayne have that jade figure on him?"

Baird shook his head. He took the two pieces of jade out of his own pocket. "No. He had given them to me to hold. And the dopes never stopped to make sure he had them. I guess they were a little nervous, even with the riot guns."

Gil snatched up the two parts of the jade figure. His eyes glinted.

Glenn growled at him, "Look here—what's this all about? Where were you while this was going on?"

Gil laughed mirthlessly. "Where

was I? I must have been at a movie. Or maybe I was having my nails manicured." He turned to go. "Take Sloan home when he's fixed up, Joe. And don't feel too bad about it. I should have put an army in here instead of just two guys."

Glenn's thick arm came up to bar his way. "Hold everything! Where the hell do you think you're going with that jade? And where the hell do you think you're going—anyway?"

Gil stopped short and glared at him. "I'm gonna earn my five grand, you dope, by getting Wayne out of one hell of a pickle. You should be the last one to stop me. I'm doing cop's work for the department, and all I get is abuse!"

"All right, all right," Glenn soothed. "Don't get huffed up. That jade figure is evidence, an' we'll need it. You can't take it away like that."

"This jade figure," Gil said slowly, "is what is going to save the police department a hell of a lot of razzing. Because it's going to bring Wayne back with a whole skin. Do I get it, or don't I?"

Glenn stared at him stonily for a long while, then shrugged. "You're a hard guy to get along with, Fenton, but I got to play this your way. You're in the saddle. You wouldn't want to take me in on the know with you eh?"

"I wouldn't," Gil told him.

Glenn sighed. "Go ahead, then." His brows came together, and he poked a finger under Gil's nose. "But if you muff this, and let Wayne get bumped, I'll ride you out of town—and don't you forget it!"

Gil pocketed the jade, grinned across the room at Stacy who was sitting up on the couch looking like a Turk with the bandage on his head and a scowl on his face. "So long, Stacy," he called, and went out with a mock salute to Glenn.

OUTSIDE, he saw the same cab driver who had brought him to the house. The driver grinned, and said: "I figured there'd be some sort of a ride back, so I hung around."

"All right," Gil grunted. "You get a good ride. Take me through the Holland Tunnel to Hoboken—and squeeze the minutes!"

At the corner of Ninth and Peasley, in Hoboken, Gil got out of the cab and said: "If you're looking for more business, you can wait around. I *might* be coming back."

The driver grinned, showing a hole where two teeth were missing. "I'll wait. You seem to be the kind of a guy that always comes back."

Gil left him and walked up past two or three buildings till he came to the dirty plate glass window on which was lettered:

SAM MEE
HAND LAUNDRY

There was a light in the store, and three undersized yellow men were working away industriously, with the sweat pouring down their necks and soaking their undershirts. They were all south of China boys, meager of build, but wiry, and dangerous in a fight.

One of them came behind the counter when Gil entered, looked at him expectantly, as if waiting for him to produce a "tickee." But when he got a good look at Gil, his face became blank, devoid of expression. His body seemed to go taut.

Gil said, in Cantonese: "It is many months since I have seen you, Sam Mee. Your health is good, I trust?"

The other two Chinamen looked up from their work when they heard the fluent flow of singsong syllables coming from the white man's mouth. Sam Mee did not show by a single flicker of expression that he understood what the detective had said. His hand stole along underneath the counter, while his eyes remained locked with the visitor's.

Gil saw the movement out of the corner of his eye, and shook his head reprovingly. "The wise man knows when he has met his superior," he

quoted in Chinese. "Do not try to press that button which will warn those inside, Sam. You remember the time that I saved you from a murder charge? You remember how fast my shooting was then? I can still shoot, Sam."

He spoke very softly, but Sam Mee stopped the motion of his hand, brought both hands to the top of the counter.

"I remember," he answered, "the service you did me, thereby placing the whole Kung Tong in your debt. But this is a matter that is deeper than the life of any of us. My brother has told me about your visit to the tong house, how you chose to take the other side. He thought you were killed there, but he was in error.

"Now that you are still alive, I beg of you, do not go behind the rear partition tonight, for you will exhaust the patience of the gods. It will surely mean your death, and I will be sad."

Gil wagged his head from side to side. "Sorry, Sam, but I got to see this through."

He walked sideways toward the rear of the store, keeping an eye on all three of them. At the rear wall he felt around with his hand until he found a button. He pressed it, and a section of the rear wall slid open. He stepped through, and the sliding door closed behind him.

Gil was in a lighted, bare room. A wiry yellow man sat before a closed door at the far end. The yellow man snarled. His hands moved like lightning, and a knife came hurtling through the air. But Gil was already on his knees. The knife imbedded itself in the closed panel, and the Chinaman reached for a gun.

Gil flashed his own out of its holster, covered the other. The Chinaman froze, hand inside of his shirt.

Gil said in the other's tongue: "You are not ready to go to meet your ancestors yet. Do not draw that weapon."

His words were convincing enough, for the Chinaman took his hand slowly out of his shirt, raised it and the other in the air.

Gil came up close to him, said in English: "It hurts me to do this, brother, but you know how it is!" His left fist crashed against the Chinaman's chin and the hatchet-man went down in a heap with a muted groan.

Gil gripped hard on the knob of the door the hatchet-man had been guarding, and turned it slowly. Then he pulled it toward him very gently. The door opened.

Through the slight crack thus made, Gil could see a room luxuriously furnished in oriental style. But he could only get a view of a small portion of it. He saw a black-garbed yellow man stooping intently over something that might have been a table.

Then he heard a smothered cry of agony. He tore the door wide open, stepped in, gun at his hip.

THERE was a table in the center of the room. Wayne, stripped to the waist, was strapped to the table. Charle Mee was standing close by, regarding the proceedings with a benign expression.

The black-garbed hatchet-man, Gil now saw, was one of three around the table. He was holding a strange sort of thing that looked like a pin cushion with the pins reversed, the points sticking outward. The cushion was attached to a bamboo handle.

Just as Gil stepped into the room, the hatchet-man had finished sweeping it down across Wayne's naked chest in a raking blow that caused the pins to scrape bloody furrows in the jade collector's body.

There was a bandage over Wayne's eyes, and he strained against his bonds in agony.

Gil said nothing, just swung his gun in an arc to cover the four yellow men. One of the black-clothed ones made a motion to go for a gun. But Charlie Mee, with a movement that was surprisingly swift for so fat a man, put a hand on his arm.

The hatchet-man let his hand drop to his side, and stared at Gil out of narrow, wicked eyes.

Charlie Mee walked around the table, came close to Gil, with his hands spread out, palms up. He said very low, in Cantonese: "You are a man of miracles. I was aware that you knew of this place, but I thought that you were killed. My heart is glad now that you were not.

"Since you seem to have us at your mercy, I ask you to wait another moment. You may learn something that will surprise you. Please answer me in my own tongue. I do not wish Wayne to know you are present."

Gil looked into the fat man's eyes, and shrugged. "I will wait, and see what I shall see," he answered. "But I am not to be taken unawares."

Charlie Mee nodded wordlessly and returned to the table on which the blindfolded Wayne was strapped. He spoke to him in English. "Where, my friend, is the image of Kung Fu-tsu? Before we go on with the Death of a Thousand Cuts, you have another chance to speak."

Wayne groaned. "I tell you, I haven't got it! I gave it to that private detective. Get him. If you torture him, he'll give it to you. Let me up! I can't stand any more!"

Charlie Mee bent lower over him. "Tell us, then, once more, what happened in your house when you killed the brother of the Kung Tong—not the story you told the police and Mr. Fenton, but the true story!"

Wayne spoke with difficulty. His chest was heaving. Little rivulets of blood were running down his body from the cuts onto the table. "I've told you that already. Can't you let me alone?"

Charlie Mee said patiently: "There is a man here whom the tong holds in high esteem. We wish him to hear the story from your own lips. Speak quickly, and we may spare you further—er—affliction."

"All right," Wayne moaned. "That Chinaman had half of the Confucius, and I had the other half. He wouldn't sell; he wanted to buy my piece. He brought his part to my house to compare it. I got him to do it, making him think I was willing to sell. And when he came, I killed him—killed him, and took his half. Together, the two halves make the most precious piece of jade in the world. I would have killed a hundred men to own the whole thing!"

Gil's eyes opened wide while Wayne spoke. He took a step toward the table, his face purpling. But he stopped as Charlie Mee bent lower and ordered: "Repeat now, the part about the secretary."

"I killed Krell, too," Wayne croaked hoarsely. "Krell came in just when I shot the Chinaman. He saw me do it. I hit him on the head, and then stabbed him with the Chinaman's knife. Then I touched the Chinaman's fingers to the safe and made it look like robbery!" His body sagged weakly in the straps. "Now, you devils, let me up," he gasped.

Charlie Mee straightened up over the table, and his eyes met Gil's. Then he waved the three hatchet-men back. The one with the pin cushion went to a corner and put it away.

Charlie Mee said to Gil, still in Cantonese: "You see, my friend, the nature of the cause you have espoused? I could not explain to you before because the laws of the tong forbid us to speak of our wrongs to one of an alien race, even if it means death to those we love. We must work out our own vengeances." He smiled a little. "But I have violated no tong laws. I told you nothing. This man has spoken for me. Now you know."

Gil slowly put his gun away. From his other pocket he took the two jade pieces, laid them together and handed the image to the fat man.

"This is yours," Gil said.

Charlie Mee took the icon, and for the first time he smiled. "I was desolated when I had to order you killed. But the tong comes before all else,

as you well know, who have yourself lived among my countrymen. Had you died, I intended, when the image was recovered, to follow you into death to seek your forgiveness. I am a happy man."

Gil took from his wallet the check that Wayne had given him and tore it to bits.

Charlie Mee looked at the pieces of paper and said: "The tong knows how to reward its friends. You shall not be the loser for having destroyed that check."

"The man on the table," Gil said sternly, "must be turned over to the law."

Charlie Mee bowed graciously. "We are done with him. He is yours. The price he would have received for his half of the jade shall go to the dead man's relatives as indemnity."

"All right," said Gil. "You deliver him. I'll go ahead and prepare Inspector Glenn."

From the table came a moan, and Wayne called out weakly: "What are you going to do with me? What are you going to do with me? Don't cut me with those pins any more!"

"You," Gil said in English, "are not going to be cut any more. You are going to burn!"

And he went out to find his cab.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACTS OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912, AND MARCH 3, 1933

Of 10-Story Detective Magazine, published bimonthly at Springfield, Mass.
for October 1, 1940.

State of New York
County of New York } ss.

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared A. A. Wyn, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Publisher of the 10-Story Detective Magazine and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the Act of March 3, 1933, embodied in section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor and business manager are: Publisher, A. A. Wyn, 67 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y.; Editor, A. A. Wyn, 67 West 44th St., New York, N. Y.; Managing Editor, A. A. Wyn, 67 West 44th St., New York, N. Y.; Business Manager, A. A. Wyn, 67 West 44th St., New York, N. Y.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated, and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.) Periodical House, Inc., 67 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y.; A. A. Wyn, 67 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y.; Rose Wyn, 67 West 44th Street, New York, N. Y.; C. & A. Publishing Co., Mount Morris, Ill.; E. L. Angel, Rockville Center, N. Y.; E. Campbell, Mount Morris, Ill.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: (If there are none, so state.) None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

5. That the average number of copies of each issue of this publication sold or distributed, through the mails or otherwise, to paid subscribers during the twelve months preceding the date shown above is (This information is required from daily publications only.)

A. A. Wyn, Publisher.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 25th day of September, 1940.

SHIRLEY L. BERICK, Notary Public
Bronx Co. Clerk No. 282
Certificate Filed in N. Y. Co. Clerk No. 1561
Commission Expires March 30, 1941

Boomerang Swag

By
Harris Clivesey

When Mort Shane tried to press his luck in a third attempt at easy swag, his money madness bucked the Grim Reaper's greed—for corpses.

IT was a cold night, but in the Clover Social Club the atmosphere was warm and thick with tobacco smoke. Steam was hissing in a white plume from the coffee urn back of the small lunch counter.

As Mort Shane came in, he heeled the door shut behind him. Pool balls ceased clicking. A voice spoke louder than the rest.

"Here he comes, the lucky stiff!"

Another spoke: "Yeah, wouldn't a bum like him get all the breaks!"

The evil scowl on Shane's face grew darker. Why were they all looking at him, he wondered. He strode over to the lunch counter and sat down, a big oxlike man with a thick neck. The suit he had on was shabby.

Men, some of them in shirt sleeves and carrying billiard cues, gathered around him.

"You won Pop's annual raffle, Shane," one said. The others joined in with congratulations, many of them grudgingly.

The scowl on Shane's heavily seamed face did not lighten. He laid coarse, hairy hands on the countertop.

"Yeah? What the hell did I win, anyway, Pop?" he asked.

"Pop" Marvin, standing behind the counter in a white apron, was smiling. His jovial, thick-jowled face fairly beamed.

"You won a nice case of whisky," he said. "I got it in the back room for you."

Shane turned his head aside and spat on the floor. "Hell—is that what I won? I ain't had a drink since—"

A little man at Shane's side finished the sentence for him.

"Since the time you got drunk an' talked yerself into a two-year stretch. You went around braggin' how you'd stuck up Rogers' drug store with a gun that wasn't loaded!"

Shane lurched from the stool. He reached out, grabbed the little man by the shirt front. He shook him until his teeth rattled. Shane never liked to be reminded of the time he had spent behind bars.

"You better learn to keep that trap of yours shut!" he snarled. He gave the frightened man a final shake before releasing him.

A tall, weedy-looking youth with a swarthy complexion and sharp features pushed his way to the front. A cigarette dangled from his weak mouth. It was Rick Vargo, a hanger-on around the club.

"I sold you the winning ticket, Shane," he said insinuatingly. "I guess you're gonna cut me in, ain't yah?"

Shane looked the youth over contemptuously. "Like hell, I am! I paid cash for that ticket, didn't I?"

Vargo stood his ground. He started to appeal to the others. Shane took a step forward and slammed the dark-faced youth a terrific blow on the side of the head with his open palm. Vargo was knocked sideways. His legs tangled and he went down. Shane stood over him, his lips curling derisively.

"You gotta nerve—trying to chisel in on me! You damn little stool pigeon!"

Vargo crouched on the floor, his black, pin-point eyes flashing hatred up at Shane. Shane sneered again and then turned away.

"Well, boys," he said, "I got a case of whisky for sale. Who'll give me twenty bucks?"

Nobody answered.

"Fifteen, then."

A man playing pinochle over at a table called out: "Twelve-fifty."

Shane's face showed disgust. "What a bunch of cheap-skates! All right, I'll take it."

The pinochle player rose and came over, peeling bills from a roll.

With the money in his hands, a change came over Shane. His hard features twisted into a crooked smile. He creased the bills several times in his thick, hairy fingers.

"This is my lucky day," he said. "I played two nags this afternoon and both of 'em came in. Now I won the raffle. Gimme a hamburger and coffee, Pop."

WHILE he was eating, he watched a group of men clustered around a gambling machine at the back of the clubroom. The men were taking turns inserting slugs and jerking the lever down. They played

a long time without anyone winning the jackpot. Finally one of them called out:

"Hey, Pop. This thing must be broke!"

Shane drained his mug of coffee and wiped thick lips on the back of a big hand. He got up and walked over.

"Here—let me have a shot," he said.

He fished a slug from his pocket and inserted it in the machine. The dials spun as he jammed the lever down. There was a series of clicks followed by the rattle of falling metal and the contents of the jackpot were spilled into a tin box.

An envious gasp came from the onlookers.

"Cripes!" one of them exclaimed. "We been feedin' the thing all night and he cleans it out first shot!"

Grinning now, Shane scooped the slugs into his hat and carried them over to the counter.

"Here, Pop. Cash these."

Pop Marvin began counting. "You got luck tonight, Shane."

"Sure! I told you it's my lucky day. Everything I touch turns out okay."

On his way home Shane stopped at the Allied Cigar Store. It was crowded. The three clerks were being kept busy. Shane tendered a quarter for his two nickel cigars and managed to get a glimpse of the well-filled cash register drawer.

Upon reaching his two-room, cold-water flat on the third floor of a tenement building, he stretched himself out on the bed and lit a cigar. He lay staring thoughtfully up at the ceiling.

For a long time he stayed there. His cigar went out, but he didn't appear to notice it. Getting up at last, he walked up and down the room, finally stopping to gaze at his reflection in a cracked mirror.

"Why not?" he argued aloud with himself. "This is my lucky day, ain't it? Everything I touch turns out okay."

Shane took his hat and went out onto the landing. He crossed to the bathroom and locked the door behind him. Dropping on his hands and knees, he pried up a loose floorboard and thrust his hand down. It came out gripping a loaded revolver.

Five minutes later Shane, his face set in a satisfied smirk, was strolling past the Allied Cigar Store again. The three clerks were still behind the counter. The hands of the clock over the doorway pointed to nine-thirty.

Shane continued on to the corner and then turned up Miller Street. Mentally he was adding hundreds to his cache in the bathroom. He knew that at ten o'clock one of the clerks from the cigar store would come along Miller Street with the day's receipts in a canvas bag. Every night, before closing, the money was taken to the People's National Bank over on Grant Avenue and dropped into the night depository slot. Shane congratulated himself on his keen powers of observation.

On both sides of Miller Street were loft buildings and manufacturers' show rooms—a district practically deserted at this time of night. Halfway down the block a narrow alley led between two high buildings. Shane, gloating over the perfect setup, halted close to the alley. He looked around carefully before stepping into a dark doorway.

HALF an hour passed before he saw the clerk from the cigar store approaching under a street light. Shane pulled a large handkerchief from his pocket and fastened it to conceal the lower part of his face.

When the clerk was almost level with the doorway, Shane stepped out and stuck the muzzle of his gun against the man's stomach.

"Take it easy, buddy!" he rasped. "Step over into the alley."

The clerk was clutching something under his tan jacket. He was a middle-aged man with a clipped mustache. Not the kind likely to make trouble, Shane decided.

In the alley, Shane made him turn around.

"Now let's have the dough!" he demanded. His voice sounded thick coming through the handkerchief.

The clerk, his wide-open eyes fixed on Shane, allowed a small canvas bag to slide from beneath his coat. He held it out.

As Shane reached to take the money, the handkerchief concealing his face slipped down. He snatched back his free hand and made a hasty grab at it. At this moment the cigar store clerk dropped the canvas bag and dived for the gun.

Snarling a vicious curse, Shane closed with the man and pinned him against the wall of the alley. He managed to get the muzzle of his gun up and press it against the clerk's chest. He squeezed the trigger.

There was a muffled explosion. The man's body gave a convulsive jerk, then slid down the wall to the ground. Shane stood rooted, staring down. A wisp of smoke rose lazily from the muzzle of his revolver.

"You damn fool!" he panted. "What'ja want to try it for?" But he was speaking to a corpse.

Shane looked out into the street. The block was deserted. Apparently no one had heard the shot. His luck sure stayed with him! Putting his gun away, he dragged the dead body to the far end of the alley. Returning, he picked up his handkerchief and the bag of money.

He had gone not more than twenty paces along the street when a figure rounded the corner at the end of the block and started toward him.

Cursing again under his breath, Shane stepped up quickly into another doorway. A lamp on the other side of the street cast dim rays into the doorway, but Shane hoped that the oncoming man would pass by without seeing him.

As the footsteps drew nearer, Shane pressed back. The man came on until he was level with the doorway and then stopped in the middle of the sidewalk. Shane slid his hand into his pocket and gripped his gun. The man took out a cigarette and struck a match.

Shane sucked in breath quickly. The face illuminated by the match was none other than Rick Vargo's—the stool pigeon at the club who had wanted a share of the case of whisky.

For one brief instant, as he flicked the match away, Vargo seemed to be staring straight into the doorway. But apparently he saw nothing. He blew out smoke and continued on his way.

Shane heaved a sigh of relief. His shirt was damp under the armpits and the palms of his hands had become moist. It had been a close call.

REACHING his flat, Shane locked the door. He counted his loot. There was one and thirty dollars in small bills and sixty dollars in silver. The silver was done up in bank wrappers—four ten-dollar rolls of quarters and four five-dollar rolls of dimes.

He put the money back into the canvas bag and carried it across to the bathroom. He hid it, together with his gun, under the loose floorboard.

Back in the living room of his flat he sat down in a chair by the window. He breathed more easily now. His luck had held good after all. It was a narrow escape though Vargo had looked straight into that doorway without seeing him.

He smoked the other cigar he had bought down to the last half-inch and sat with a newspaper across his knees. He found it impossible to keep his mind on the print. He got up and opened the window. Below, on the sidewalk, a group of men were standing. One of them was talking excitedly. By leaning out a bit Shane could hear snatches of what he was saying.

"Yeah—a cigar store clerk—shot through the heart— A holdup—"

Shane closed the window again. So they'd found the body already. Well—let 'em! He had nothing to be afraid of.

He was making a cup of coffee when

the pay telephone out on the landing rang. He opened the door and unhooked the receiver.

"That you, Shane?" a voice inquired.

"Yeah. Al Shultz, ain't it?"

"That's me. Listen, Shane — I thought I'd tip you off."

Fear rose in Shane's throat in a solid lump. He choked it down. "What'ja mean?" he asked.

"I just come from the station house. I was up there to see about a neighbor's kid that got lost. While I was talkin' to the sergeant at the desk somebody came out of the detectives' room and left the door open. I seen Rick Vargo in there."

Sweat dappled Shane's brow like raindrops. He licked dry lips. Shultz was still talking.

"The dirty little stoolie was informin' on you, Shane! I heard him mention your name an' tell the cops where you live. If I was you, I'd—"

Shane didn't wait for any advice. He knew what to do. Slamming up the receiver he ran across into the bathroom. Panic had gripped him and turned his stomach into a heavy lump of ice. That dirty informing little rat had spotted him hiding in the doorway—but had been cunning enough not to let on. Oh, the damn dirty little stool pigeon!

Hastily, Shane fumbled his gun from under the bathroom floor. He pulled out the canvas money bag, emptied it with nervous fingers, stuffed his pockets with the bills and rolls of silver.

Back out on the landing he saw a policeman coming up the stairs from the second floor.

A seething rage contorted Shane's face into a mask of blind hatred. His eyes were those of a wild man. No longer did he feel frightened. He had killed one man tonight and he could kill others if they got in his way. He jerked out his gun.

As Shane fired, the cop yelled something and threw himself flat against the wall of the stairs. A slug ploughed a furrow into the plaster a few inches from his right ear.

Shane never had time to fire again. The policeman had his own gun out and shot from the hip. A .45 bullet ripped a hole clear through Shane's stomach. His gun hand drooped, the revolver clattered to the floor.

Rising on his toes, Shane clasped both hands to his middle, then keeled forward and toppled down the stairs. He fell past the cop, thudding all the way to the bottom.

Doors banged open on the landings. A woman began to scream. The policeman walked slowly down the stairs to where Shane's body lay. He stooped to pick up a paper-wrapped roll of dimes that had fallen from Shane's pocket. Penciled on the wrapper were the words: *Allied Cigar Store.*

A few minutes later a second policeman came puffing up from the street. He looked at the dead man, then at the officer who had shot him.

"What happened, Wilson?" he asked.

The first policeman juggled the roll of dimes in his left hand. "That's the guy who pulled the Allied Cigar job. He started shooting as soon as he saw me."

"You were taking a chance—trying it alone. Why didn't you call me? I was on the corner."

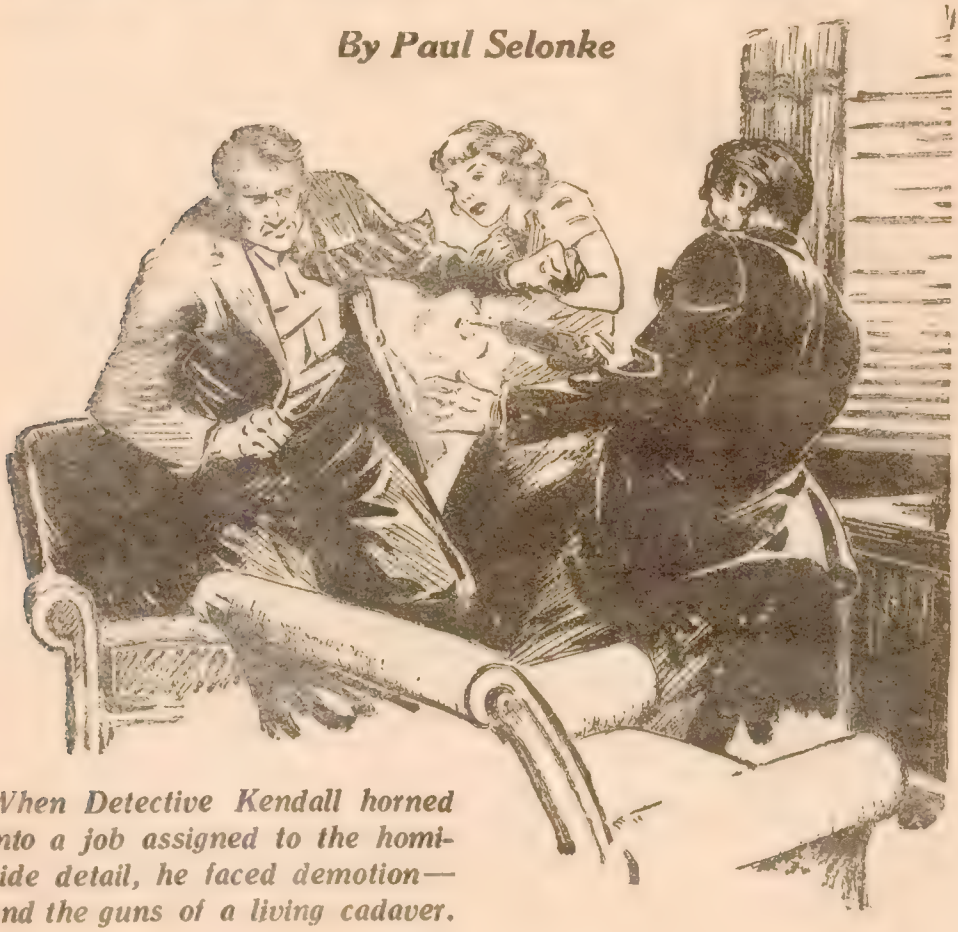
Patrolman Wilson shrugged his broad shoulders. "Nobody knew Shane was the killer."

"Didn't you come here after him?"

"Sure. The captain sent me. Shane won a case of whisky tonight in a raffle. He got rid of it. Rick Vargo hated Shane's guts. He squealed on him—for selling liquor without a license!"

Case of the Living Corpse

By Paul Selonke



When Detective Kendall horned into a job assigned to the homicide detail, he faced demotion—and the guns of a living cadaver.

DETECTIVE KENDALL ordinarily enjoyed his daily stop at Pete's Place, but on this afternoon the beer tasted flat and the smell of the joint rankled his stomach. He was still smarting from what the commissioner had told him less than a half-hour before.

"I'm getting sick and tired of this, Kendall," the commissioner had said. "The fact Worthley is a friend of yours doesn't give you leave to butt into work assigned to the homicide detail. Another instance like this and it'll be a precinct beat in harness. Understand?"

Kendall understood perfectly well. Somehow, though, he couldn't make himself quit nosing around. Worthley had been more than a roommate these past months—sandy-haired, with a square, freckled face, he had become like a kid brother. And the night the thing happened and the death gun was traced to Worthley, Kendall told headquarters:

"Sure I know he was having some trouble with Sylvester Fox. But I'll stake my bottom buck that he had nothing to do with the murder of that crooked loan-shark. I know the kid, through and through."

The kid claimed innocence when a homicide detective located him in an uptown beer stube. He said that if Fox had been murdered, Ed Garvey had done it. He talked in that mild, disarming way of his, and at the same time was wrapping his fingers into a fist. The fist lifted neatly to the detective's unguarded chin—and Worthley vanished.

But Garvey was dead. At the time he was being investigated in connection with the disappearance of a private detective named Carthers, Ed Garvey had died of a heart attack.

Headquarters had carefully checked on that death. That was the reason they scoffed now. But Kendall couldn't see why Worthley would pull such a deliberate lie.

So he nosed around. The murdered Sylvester Fox had only one living relative—Sheila, his daughter. Because of headquarters regulations, Kendall had been forced to resort to telephone conversations with her. Her attitude had been reticent, almost antagonistic. Yet it seemed she knew a lot about Worthley, so he sneaked to her house with the intention of browbeating more facts out of her—only to be stopped at the door by a homicide captain who happened to be leaving. And the result was this afternoon's session with the commissioner.

It left only the Ed Garvey problem to work on now. But where in the devil can a man look for a hoodlum who was legally dead? Kendall made a growling sound in his throat when he remembered how people laughed and referred him to the Green Lawn Cemetery. He left half his beer standing on Pete's bar and headed for the door.

A hand grabbed him by the arm. He turned swiftly and stared into the flat, square face of a thick-shouldered stranger.

"Well?" said Kendall.

The stranger jerked his head at the bar. "Pete tells me you're that dick who's asking questions about Ed Garvey."

"What if I am?"

"I'm Joe Sweeny, just in from New York. I used to be a crib-buster. I came here to try to get a new, honest start."

"Okay, you're a reformed safe-cracker. I'm busy."

SWEENY grabbed Kendall's arm again. "Wait a minute," he begged. "You don't know the spot I'm in. Headquarters ain't very partial to helping ex-crooks like me. When I talked it over with Pete, he suggested I see you about it."

"And I thought Pete was my friend," growled Kendall.

"You've got to help me," Sweeny said earnestly. "I'm living in a shack on Fourth Street—Number 914. A mug was waiting for me there when I came home last night. I'd quite a rep in New York and this guy seemed to know it. He says, 'I'll make it a grand if you'll open a certain peter for me.' "

"And you don't want to because you're trying to steer straight?"

"Right. But he's a tough monkey who won't take no for an answer."

"Where's the safe he wants cracked?"

"In a house in Hyde Park. He says he wants something out of a wall crib there. He didn't say whose house it was. He only hinted that if I didn't string along I'd probably be found in a gutter. I'm off cracking, so help me. That's why I'm reporting this."

Something in Sweeny's voice carried conviction. Yet there also was something about him that prodded Kendall's suspicion. Sweeny seemed just a little too glib.

"What did the mug look like?" Kendall asked.

Sweeny said: "He was fat as an elephant, and as tough. I didn't place him until he grinned at me—a grin that only worked on one side of his face. Only one guy I know of has a half-paralyzed puss, and that's Ed Garvey!"

Kendall's hands lashed out and jerked Sweeny close. He leered into his face. "You sure about that?"

"Sure as hell. Ed Garvey is pretty well known in New York." Sweeny pulled himself loose from Kendall and backed away a step, nervousness on his flat face. "He's the kind who'd blast down his own grandmother if she crossed him, so you see the spot I'm in."

"Garvey's the one who's in the heat, you mean."

Relief lighted Sweeny's eyes. "You gonna have cops at my shack?"

"No."

"What then?" Sweeny asked.

Kendall couldn't believe that Garvey was alive, though that was what he had been trying to prove. Together with the fact that Sweeny had singled him out of all people, he detected a peculiar smell to the business. It struck him that somebody, aside from the police, was trying to keep him out of the Sylvester Fox murder investigation.

"I think I better take your place tonight," he said at last.

"Don't be a fool," scoffed Sweeny. "You'd give yourself away before you even lifted a tool."

"It's the only stunt that might work," Kendall told him. "The cops wouldn't believe you if you told them what you told me. You don't seem to know that Ed Garvey's supposed to be a dead pigeon."

Sweeny stared, bewildered. "How in the devil then—"

"Never mind about that. You spoke of some stuff he wanted out of that safe. Did he say exactly what it was?"

"No, he didn't." Sweeny bit at his lip nervously. "How can you work it that you go instead of me? He'll be bound to catch on."

"What time is he coming to pick you up?"

"Around ten."

"Good. I'll be there a half-hour earlier."

"I don't like this. It's like we're both sticking our necks out. I don't hanker to be bed-partners with you on a slab in the morgue."

"DON'T worry, Sweeny," Kendall said grimly. "Leave this to me and I'll see that that doesn't happen."

The first thing he did after leaving Pete's Place was to put a long distance telephone call through to the New York police. It felt good learning that Sweeny actually was a safe-cracker—that he had lately gotten out of stir and had vowed to go on the straight. Yet, at the same time, Kendall knew how rarely ex-convicts kept their promises.

Satisfaction glowed in his heart, however. He had stirred up a reaction by his unwanted snooping, and it proved to him that Worthley wasn't guilty of murder. Trap or no trap, he was sticking his head smack into this business, regardless of what the commissioner had said.

Kendall left his gun and badge at home and only took jacket precautions when he went out that night. He was fully aware of how much lay at stake. If things went wrong, not only would he fail to save his likable roommate from the chair, but he himself would probably be found in that gutter Sweeny had mentioned.

The nine-hundred block of Fourth Street was in a disreputable section of town. On one side stood hulking loft buildings, looking like bleak, forbidding monsters in the foggy night. Across from them, sprawled a lightless lumber yard. And searching the darkness, Kendall found Sweeny's shack not far beyond the yard. Set back from the street, it had obviously been a part of the lumber yard at one time.

Sweeny opened the door a crack when Kendall knocked. Seeing it was the detective, he let him in. He moved to bolt the door again, but Kendall said crisply:

"Leave it unlocked, Sweeny."

Sweeny stared at Kendall, the moist white of his distended eyes gleaming eerily in the lamplight. It made Kendall suddenly realize that Sweeny was

scared green—that the safe-cracker, after all, had told the truth. Yet Ed Garvey couldn't be alive. Kendall had gone to Garvey's funeral and had seen him buried.

Kendall changed his plans. He pushed Sweeny down into a chair, took out a pocketknife and opened it.

"Rest your tail, Sweeny, and let me handle things," he said.

Sweeny looked at him queerly.

"Don't get excited," Kendall added. "This is all in the way of justice. A little facial operation."

"What are you gonna do?"

"Just grit your molars and sit tight. This is got to be the McCoy if we're to fool Garvey." Kendall knifed a deep gash along Sweeny's jawbone. It bled a lot, sending red rivulets down Sweeny's thick neck.

"Of all the screwy ideas—" Sweeny lifted his arm to wipe away the blood, but Kendall restrained him.

"There's got to be a lot of blood, Sweeny." Kendall took up one of the light chairs and smashed it. He overturned the table. Then, a tight expression on his face, he walked to the window. "Now to watch—"

He stopped abruptly. "Lord, trouble's come ahead of time! Somebody's out there, climbing out of his car!" He whirled to Sweeny, his fists knotted. "Up on your pins, Sweeny, we're going to fight. And when I sock you, remember to play you're out like a light!"

SWEENY'S coiled nerves sent him bounding up. His fists lashed out, and he met Kendall in the center of the room. It was a noisy, furious battle. When the door squealed open, Kendall sent over a blow that practically lifted Sweeny out of his socks. Sweeny went down.

"What's going on around here?" snarled a voice from the door.

Kendall turned, his fists cocked. His jaw dropped in shocked incredulity when he saw the fat colossus that stood there. It was Ed Garvey—alive! The same Ed Garvey he had seen buried in the Green Lawn Cemetery!

Garvey's cold eyes glittered out of a saggy-jowled face. Sloppily dressed, he wasn't wearing a vest, and his thumbs were hooked in the belt that was almost hidden by the folds of his big belly.

"What's going on around here?" he repeated dangerously.

Kendall controlled his surprise. He snapped: "What's it to you? If you want to make something out of it—"

"You can be lucky if I don't," Garvey interrupted. He padded over, hooked a foot under Sweeny's shoulder and rolled him on his back. Sweeny wasn't shamming; Kendall had seen to it that it wouldn't be necessary. Being so bloody, Sweeny looked in terrible shape.

Garvey's big nostrils flared as he jerked his head back to Kendall. "You sap! Sweeny was all set to do a job for me. Now look at him."

"Oh," sneered Kendall, "so you're the mug he was walking out on me for. Damn it, what did you have to come horning in for? We were all set for a loan-office job I'd cased. I come here to pick him up and he says no go. Huh, I should have given him worse. And as for you—"

Garvey raised a bloated hand. "Take it easy. Seeing this is all your idea, maybe you'll find yourself elected. Can you blow a crib?"

Kendall eyed him sullenly. "What if I can?"

"It means you'll have to do Sweeny's job for me."

"And if I say no?"

Ed Garvey's big hand flashed to a back pocket and returned gripping a .45 automatic. It was swift gun legerdemain, and Garvey answered Kendall's surprised stare with his characteristic lopsided grin.

"What do you think now, flat-heel?" chuckled Garvey.

Kendall rubbed his lean jaw with the back of his hand. "What'll the kickback be to me?"

"We'll see." Garvey expertly

frisked him. "That's just to be sure you don't get ideas. I've got a bag of 'workers' in the car, so get moving."

Kendall gave him a hard look and slouched out of the house. The game, so far, had gone well enough. But it seemed he was going to need more than cold nerve and bluff. Once they reached that safe in Hyde Park, he knew things were going to happen and happen fast.

A sedan was parked under the street light. Garvey opened the front door and nodded toward the wheel. "You're doing the driving, Mister."

Kendall made no reply and climbed into the car. He saw a young woman sitting in the back seat. She was a nice-looking brunette and had an emotionless white face. Her lips quirked into a half-smile.

"Ed," she cooed, "I thought Sweeny was a little gorilla. Now he turns out to be actually good-looking."

"Shut up and behave yourself," Garvey grated, climbing in beside her.

A DEEP frown scored Kendall's brow as he started up the car. He had never seen this girl before, but he recognized her from newspaper photographs. She was Sheila Fox, the murdered loan-shark's daughter.

What was the connection? Fox had gone to great lengths to make his daughter into a respectable lady—which, thanks to finishing schools, he had. A girl like that wouldn't be sporting around with a rat like Ed Garvey.

"Drive to Hyde Park," Garvey ordered.

"Okay," nodded Kendall, and started the sedan rolling. He was thinking about how he had believed Sheila was on the level. Now he saw he was wrong—just as he had been wrong believing Ed Garvey dead. It awakened cold flutters inside his stomach when he realized what would happen to him if he made any more mistakes.

Later, the sedan slid down a certain dark street in Hyde Park.

"This is where we get out, flat-heel," snapped Garvey.

The .45 was dangling in his fingers as he hoisted himself out to the street. Kendall stared at it. So did Sheila, who laughed brittlely.

"Ed, can't you put the gun away awhile?"

Garvey regarded her suspiciously. He returned the gun to his fat hip, his eyes flashing warning to Kendall. "I can heist the cannon in a hurry, don't forget."

"I'm not forgetting," Kendall answered levelly.

"Okay then. The house I want is in the middle of the next block, so let's get moving. You lead the way, Mister."

They started off and it took but a minute to reach the place.

Kendall stared at the house. "Hey, this is Carthers' house. You know, that private dick who disappeared—"

Garvey whirled to him, his fat lips drawing back from his teeth in a snarl. "What do you mean by that crack?"

"Take it easy," replied Kendall. "There's no sense getting on the muscle because I recognize the dump. I've lived in town all my life."

"You won't live here much longer if you get the wrong ideas."

"Ed," cautioned Sheila Fox, "you've got to calm down."

"Shut up!" Garvey turned from her and shoved Kendall with his fat hand. "Come on, Mister. I ain't got all night."

Kendall led the way into the grounds, his brain churning. So Garvey *did* have something to do with Carthers' disappearance — a fact which the police were trying to prove at the time of Garvey's apparent death. And he and Sheila had reasons for getting into the Carthers' safe. It meant the Fox murder and the disappearance of the private detective were definitely hooked together!

Garvey stopped at one of the low windows of the trim colonial house.

TSD

"This is it," he said.

The window lock was broken, and it occurred to Kendall that these two had been here before. Ed Garvey banged the window open noisily.

Kendall jumped and said: "Hey, you don't have to wake up the whole neighborhood."

"Carthers' son ain't home," retorted Garvey. "He's on the West coast, looking for his old man. Get inside and let me do the worrying."

Kendall had the satchel of "workers" in his hand when he climbed over the sill into the dark, musty room. His every nerve was taut. It was bad enough to be here with a gun at his back—but Garvey, living all these months under dread of being discovered alive, was a dozen times more dangerous. Kendall wondered if he had taken the wrong way to handle this. He didn't like to think of what probably would take place in the house.

He reached in his back pocket for the flashlight he habitually carried there, but changed his mind when he saw that Garvey and the girl had entered the room. Garvey had a flashlight in his hand and was playing it on the south wall.

THE wall was paneled. Garvey slid his pudgy finger to a spot along a molding. There was a whirring sound as a panel slid back, revealing the face of a wall safe.

Garvey spoke sharply: "Get going, Mister."

Kendall licked his lips, striving to recall some of the things he had heard about safe-cracking. He ran his sweaty fingers over the cool, smooth face of the safe. The box looked impregnable as a bank vault, so he turned to Garvey, who was behind the glare of the flashlight.

"Better put this off until you can get Sweeny," he suggested. "He's more hep to these up-to-date jobs."

"Cribs are cribs," growled Garvey, "and I'm not a guy to be trifled with. Blow the box or have me blow your gut. Take your choice."

Kendall shrugged heavily. "I only thought I'd put you wise to what we're up against. What do you want out of the safe anyhow?"

"A dead man's face. Get going."

"A dead man's—what?" Kendall felt the back of his neck prickle.

"Quit horsing around," Garvey snapped impatiently. "If you hadn't shoved Sweeny around, you wouldn't be in this spot."

Kendall sucked in a quivering breath. It was incredible that the embalmed face of a dead man could be in the safe. Yet Garvey seemed sure of what he was doing. It brought that fluttering back to Kendall's stomach as he bent down and opened the bag of "workers."

Sheila Fox was in the shard of light, watching him, her face strained with worry. Kendall studied her a second, wondering, then he took a Diamond Special drill from the bag and turned back to the safe.

The safe was a bleak wall in front of him. From the moment he had left Sweeny's shack, he had been trying to work out a stunt to trap Ed Garvey. Now, it seemed, it was too late for anything.

He paused in his drilling and glanced at the bit.

Garvey rasped: "What are you stalling for now?"

"The drill isn't biting right," said Kendall, and began again.

This time he felt the bit grip into the steel. It began grinding in hungrily, and he strove to hold the drill back. He didn't know the correct move after the drill got all the way through. Garvey, with a knowledge of such things, would catch on and—

Loosening his grip on the drill, Kendall stopped to turn to him. "I'll have to try again, over a little. A rivet's stopping the drill."

"Oh," sneered Garvey, "so that's the way it is."

Kendall's eyes tried to penetrate the light. "I don't get you."

"I told Sweeny I'd nail him to the wall if he tried tricks."

"You've got Sweeny wrong, I tell you."

"Like hell I have!" roared Garvey. "I happen to know boxes like this ain't got door rivets! It means that fist fight was a copper gag—"

Kendall's blood went cold in his veins and he flung himself desperately at the glaring flashlight. He was no more than five feet from Garvey when the pistol blazed. The slug smashed like a sledge over his heart. He heard Sheila's whimpering cry of horror as he dropped down. But he didn't remember hitting the floor.

AWAKENING later, he found that he still lay in that dark room. There were no sounds. He imagined he was alone now, so he sat up. The bullet-proof vest he'd had the precaution to wear had saved his life. But his chest ached as though a piano had dropped on him.

He dug the flashlight from his pocket and staggered up to his feet. The shard of light showed him that the room he was in was a library. He saw Carthers' big desk nearby. A photograph on the desk attracted him. In a silver swivel-frame, it was a portrait of Worthley!

Startled, Kendall moved to the desk and turned his light full upon the picture. And he saw the handwritten inscription under the picture: "To Dad, from his loving son, Tom."

Kendall forgot his aches in that moment of surprise. Worthley then, was Carthers' son who was supposed to be in California.

Somehow, though, it didn't make sense. Why had a kid like that been hiding incognito in a cheap rooming house? Could it be that he knew his father had been murdered? That he was seeking his father's killer?

Yet how could that be so when his father's body was never found?

"I've got it!" Kendall exclaimed as a startling thought struck him. "So that's how it was!"

He turned, went to the window and crawled out. The cool night air felt good to his tortured lungs, but it did not appease the fevered whirl of his thoughts. He had to get aid from the police. Not because he suddenly had stumbled on the horrible truth, but in order to prevent Garvey's wrath from descending on Sweeny.

Kendall's heart sank when he reached the intersection, three blocks from the Carthers house. No stores were open; everything was shuttered and black. A cab was plying lazily along the street. Kendall ran out across the curb and hailed it.

"Where's the nearest phone?" he snapped when the cab pulled up.

The driver grinned. "Nowhere around this neighborhood. They pull these sidewalks in at sundown. Better let me drive you over to Tenth Street. Lots is doing over there on Tenth."

"Too far. Where's the precinct station?"

"Over on Tenth, too."

It brought that cold fluttering back to Kendall's stomach when he heard that. He saw he would get no help from headquarters—at least, not in time. It left no course but to go unarmed and alone to Sweeny's shack. He would have to face Ed Garvey again.

"The nine hundred block on Fourth, cabby, and make it fast," he said, and prayed he would not be too late.

And after he climbed into the cab, he tried to figure out how Sheila Fox stood in Garvey's vicious murder puzzle. It was incredible that she, cultured, refined, should be a part of the plot which resulted in the murder of her own father.

His face grim under this pressure of conflicting thoughts, Kendall pulled off his coat. He pulled off his iron vest. It was a relief getting that constricting garment off his aching chest. . . .

The cab dropped Kendall off on a corner not far from Sweeny's shack. He crept past the dark lumber yard. Exultation tingled his body when he saw Ed Garvey's empty sedan parked

under that same street light. It meant, perhaps, that he had reached here in time after all.

He searched the sedan, hopeful of finding a weapon, but there was none. At least, he reflected as his fingers automatically went to his chest, he was protected. Then his blood chilled when he felt the cloth of his shirt instead of the bullet-proof vest. He had inadvertently left the armor in the taxicab!

His sense of caution cried out as he slanted his eyes to the lighted shack. Unprotected like this, only a fool would go in there to face death. It made him feel a little sick.

He wasn't afraid of dying. Rather, it was the thought of failure that sickened him. He would be failing the Carthers kid, whom he had learned to love like a brother. He would be failing Sweeny, who had given him his opportunity. Worse, Garvey's existence would still be unknown to the police.

IT WAS a deep, compelling sense of justice that sent him creeping toward the shack. He stole up to where a window was a yellow square of light to the right of the door, and chanced a glance into the shack.

Sweeny, he saw, lay unconscious on the floor, his skull bared by an ugly, bleeding head wound. Sheila Fox stood between Ed Garvey and the fallen man. Garvey had his bloody automatic reversed in his right hand. Sheila, her little hands to his expansive chest, was pleading with him. Her voice was a blurred mumble in Kendall's ears.

Kendall had come to hate this girl who was in league with her father's murderer. Now he wasn't so sure of that hate. She couldn't be entirely bad if she was pleading for Sweeny's life. And considering that she had Garvey's attention—

Kendall streaked to the door. The ill-fitting door showed a line of light along its edge, and he was able to see it was unbolted. He wrapped his fingers around the doorknob—then paused when the voice of Garvey, distorted with fury, came to him.

"Drop that rod, Sheila! Drop it! Have you gone batty?"

"Not a move, Garvey!" she gritted, her voice heavy with emotion. "You shot dad down just like you did Carthers. I've been waiting for this chance—"

A smacking sound, the roar of a discharged gun, and Ed Garvey shouted: "Okay, I did burn down your old man! I'll show you what—"

Sheila's terrified scream made Kendall forget all about his caution. The door banged against the inside wall as he lunged into the room.

Ed Garvey was standing spraddle-legged above the fallen girl, turning his gun to rip vengeful slugs through her body. Garvey twisted his bulk as Kendall came hurtling at him, leering coldly as he whipped the weapon in the direction of the door.

His feet practically off the floor in his plunge, Kendall's racing brain was reminding him how fast Garvey was with that .45. If Garvey had more than a split second, he would be the only one who would leave this place alive. But a crack of steel to fat flesh halved that split second. Garvey roared in rage as his gun oddly thumped to the floor.

Kendall smashed into him then, knocking him over—and landing on Garvey felt like landing on a spongy mattress. He swept a haymaker from his heels, burying the fist in the flabby folds of Garvey's chin. Garvey's head jerked from the impact. His mouth dribbled blood as unconsciousness overwhelmed him.

Kendall picked up the .45 and crawled to his feet. He looked at Sheila, who was on her knees staring at him, a little nickel-plated revolver forgotten in her fingers. Kendall realized she had slugged Garvey's gun hand with that revolver. He wiped his forehead with the back of his hand and grinned.

"You came through, miss," he said to her. "Thanks."

"I should be the one to thank you," she answered. "I recognized your voice. You're that detective Tom Carthers was rooming with."

Kendall narrowed his eyes. "You knew Worthley is really the Carthers kid?"

She nodded. "Tom and I met while I was at school. We're to be married."

KENDALL kept staring at her. Finally, he said: "That makes me see a little light. So stop me if I'm wrong. The police suspected Carthers had found facts on some racket Garvey was in—and that Garvey made Carthers vanish permanently. Tom, Carthers' son, must have seen Garvey after he was supposed to be dead. He took a room with me and went under an assumed name.

"Seeing he knew Carthers was legally buried, Tom suspected that it was his father that actually was buried. That Garvey arranged that a doctor sign a death certificate for himself, and by superimposing a wax mask of his own face over Carthers' features, everybody would believe it was he who was in that grave. Tom secretly dug up the body and placed the wax mask in that safe—"

"Tom didn't dig up the body," Sheila broke in. "And I'm the one who first saw Garvey alive. That was the night I came home from school. He was visiting at our house and I recognized him from newspaper pictures. Garvey came nightly after that. In horror I learned dad was in that racket with Garvey. They argued and fought a lot. It looked like things were coming to a nasty end.

"One day, using the name of Worthley and posing as one of his father's operatives, Tom came to the house—at my suggestion. He told dad he had Carthers' information and suggested dad turn evidence against Garvey, whom Tom said was alive. Tom came over a second time. Garvey was in the next room then, and he saw dad take Tom's gun away from him and kick him out.

"Then Tom had me tell dad I knew what he was doing with Garvey, that I had cultivated Tom's acquaintance in an effort to find out how much he knew about my father's activities. I told him that Tom, drunk, had bragged about digging up a corpse and finding something which he hid in that safe. As you said, Tom did imagine that perhaps it had been his father's body that was buried in that grave."

"I get it," frowned Kendall. "You only said Tom had dug up the body so you could watch Garvey's reaction. But why didn't Tom come directly to the police and arrange for a disinterment?"

"Because he knew how clever Garvey's lawyers are. There wasn't much *proof* against Garvey. So Tom decided to do to Garvey what Garvey had done to his father. It was the only vengeance he could see. But he had to hide when Garvey shot dad with his gun."

"Which fortunately spoilt those blood-thirsty plans."

Sheila Fox shook her head. "I know where Tom is hiding. Our plan was to have me lead Garvey on until I knew when he meant to rob the safe, so Tom could be there. I knew about Garvey's unsuccessful attempt to rob the safe yesterday by himself. But with Garvey on my hands day and night, I didn't get to tell Tom about tonight."

Kendall growled: "I don't blame Tom for wanting to burn Garvey down. Every cop on the force has had that itch. But why didn't he confide in me? As it stands, it'll be tough beating this murder rap."

"Mr. Kendall, I've evidence I've been withholding until Tom could take care of Garvey his way—evidence which I know will prove Garvey's guilt. With our story that Tom was hiding in his own home and killed Garvey as a trespasser, we were sure both murders would be avenged. But now Garvey is still alive. This will go to court and his crafty lawyers will use their tricks—"

Sheila's face suddenly went slack with horror. "Oh! Look out!"

Kendall whirled to see Garvey charging him like a maddened monster. The awakened, bloody-visaged brute smashed his fat body against him—grabbed for the gun. The gun roared.

Ed Garvey halted in his tracks, a blank look on his flabby face as he clutched at the hole in his chest. And Kendall felt the floor jar under his feet as Garvey collapsed.

Kendall bent over him, then rose.

"I don't think you kids will have anything to worry about now," he said wearily. "Garvey needs an undertaker—not a lawyer."

BIG CASH AWARDS FOR CAMERA FANS

Now is the time to get in on America's greatest hobby—amateur photography. Picture taking for readers of PRIZE PHOTOGRAPHY is twice as much fun. More than that—it's profitable. PRIZE PHOTOGRAPHY is the magazine for all picture takers. Here's why:

☆ PRIZE PHOTOGRAPHY features five big picture-taking contests in every issue. Its exclusive pictorial articles tell you how to make good pictures. Simply follow the helpful tips these features contain and send in your pictures. You may win one of the many $25, $15, $10 and $5 prizes awarded each month.

☆ PRIZE PHOTOGRAPHY is first in the latest developments in the camera world. Every issue is packed with interesting stories on photography at work in science, crime detection, the army, etc.

☆ PRIZE PHOTOGRAPHY contains valuable tips for amateurs who develop and print their own pictures. Plans for building enlargers, handy gadgets for the darkroom, camera accessories, etc., are described in every issue.

☆ PRIZE PHOTOGRAPHY contains hundreds of striking pictures and data on how they were made. This big rotogravure printed magazine is America's Greatest Photo Value. Rush to your nearest newsstand now. It's only 15 cents a copy.

PRIZE PHOTOGRAPHY

15c — AT ALL NEWSSTANDS — 15c

Coast guardsman Dave Phelps had discovered many of the sea's strange secrets. But now he was grappling with a macabre mystery—in which crimson clues spattered the trail to a . . .

Phantom Hideout

By Stanley King

IN THE howling blackness of the gale-swept beach the faint cry sounded eerie, ghostlike. Dave Phelps held his lantern high and tried to peer through black sheets of rain. His long slicker whipped like a sail against his high-booted legs.

The beach was a pitch-black smear. For an instant a jagged streak of lightning hung like a forked branch in the midnight sky. Then it was gone, leaving the coast guardsman's eyes dazed and blinking.

He listened for the cry again. It had sounded like the terrified wail of a woman. Was it only his imagination, a trick of the screaming wind?

Or did it come from Seaside Inn?

High up on the landside, Phelps could barely see the half-invisible frame structure of the Seaside Inn, with its tall lighthouse tower pointed like a darkened finger against the sky. No woman would be there—no one but Clem Daly, the watchman. The glassed windows of the rambling dance hall were closed now and boarded up. The summer season was over.

Like a crusted, empty shell the Seaside Inn would loom there through the coming autumn and winter. The first warm days of spring brought back again the rhythm of dance music, the clink of liquor glasses, the laughter of gay couples. But tonight it was black and empty, except for the drowsing watchman and the tiny glow of his lamp in the distant kitchen.

Suddenly Phelps swore uneasily. The light—it wasn't there. Not a sign of Clem Daly's lamp.

The coast guardsman turned sharply toward the deserted dance pavilion. But his rubber boots had hardly scuffed the sand when he stopped short, mouth agape.

"Help! Help, help!"

A woman's voice. It was wailing with shuddering terror from the open beach ahead of Phelps.

Like a tall rubber-sheathed ghost himself, Phelps rushed up the beach, kicking the sand in dark, soggy spurts. His eyes, shielded by the stiff visor of his water-proofed hat, peered grimly ahead. There was no further cry to guide him, but he knew instinctively where the woman would be. She must be huddled under the bathing sheds in a feeble effort to get away from the wild lash of the storm.

With swinging haste he threw the yellow flare of his lantern on the dry sand under the tight flooring of the bathing shed.

A girl—he saw her. Phelps recognized her with a groan of deep concern. It was Rita Daly, the sister of the watchman of the Seaside Inn.

He dropped to one knee in the sand and pillowed her slack head in his dripping lap.

"Rita! Are you all right? Rita!"

She lay there limp, speechless, like a corpse. Her tangled golden hair was like a wet halo; her soaked dress clung to her inert body. She was alive. But what had happened to her? Why was she out here in the midnight darkness of a storm-drenched beach?

As Phelps bent toward her face his nostrils quivered suddenly. He could smell the faint reek of liquor on her lovely red lips. He shook his head with dull puzzlement. He had known Rita from childhood. He knew that she never touched the stuff. What did it all mean?

The thought of Clem Daly, her brother, crossed his mind and made his face darken with a grim anger. Was Clem behind this? Clem, her sullen and erratic brother, whom she had mothered and cared for and defended almost as long as Phelps could remember?

Gently the coast guardsman began chafing the ice-cold cheeks. The pale eyelids quivered; stark eyes stared up at him with glazed incomprehension.

"Rita!" he whispered. "What happened?"

"Dave!" Weakly her arms crept around his neck. "Oh, Dave, Dave! I don't know what I—I—"

Suddenly she pushed him away from her. Her eyes went stony with a look of blind horror.

"Blood," she whispered. "I saw Clem's dead face—covered with blood. Have I been dreaming it?"

Lightning streaked the sand with a sudden flare. It lit up for an instant the driving sheets of rain and the white tumble of roaring surf, smashing itself in wild spray on the beach.

"How did you get here?" Phelps asked with gentle insistence.

"I—I don't know. I woke up in the sand under the timbers here. I was all alone and terribly frightened.

Then I remembered—and I think I screamed—"

"What did you remember, Rita?"

"My brother." Her lips trembled with sick horror. "Blood all over his face and his—his hair. I dreamed I —I killed Clem."

The girl's white-faced sincerity sent a tingle of unbelieving horror coursing through the body of the staring young coast guardsman.

"This is madness. You've been drugged, poisoned. What did you drink?"

"I—I came over to the Inn tonight to—to bring Clem his coffee and sandwiches. I was soaking wet from the storm—it's almost a mile from the cottage. He made me take a drink to warm me up."

"Hmm. Where did Clem get the liquor?" Phelps' voice was a growl.

"He said he found a bottle in the pantry. I was terrified. You know what my brother is when he gets hold of whisky. Clem was so ugly and insistent—that I took a drink, hoping to quiet him."

"What happened then?"

"I don't know, Dave. I seemed to go to sleep, to dream. I—I think we quarreled. I could hear Clem's voice, thick and sleepy and—horrible. It seemed to come to me out of a queer drowsy cloud. He was boasting about money—heaps and heaps of money, he said. He said he was going to be rich, that I was going to be rich, too—if I was a sensible sister and kept my mouth shut."

"And then?"

"Then I—we seemed to quarrel. It was like a dream. I saw Clem's face; he was on the floor. He was covered with blood and—and I saw a broken bottle beside him, the jagged edges all soaked with blood. I don't know what happened after that!"

PHELPS' eyes were fixed with a shrinking fascination on the slim hands that lay limply on the sand under the yellow flare of his lantern. The palms were smeared with crimson. Blood—it was fresh blood.

"I've killed him," Rita moaned. "I've killed my own brother!"

"You've killed no one," Phelps said harshly. His lean jaw tightened. "We're going back to the Seaside Inn and find out what has happened."

He picked up the girl with a sudden muscular heave and threw her lightly across his shoulder. With the lantern swinging in his left hand like a wind-blown spark, he fought his way across the black expanse of beach.

The wooden steps that led shoreward across the huge stone boulders of the breakwater gushed under his boots like dark miniature waterfalls. Phelps clumped doggedly past the boarded windows of the inn, oblivious of the limp weight across his shoulder. In front was a concrete parking space for the automobiles that thronged to the inn in summer. But now it was black emptiness where the wind howled and rain danced and spat with wild fury.

The girl moaned and stirred faintly in Phelps' tight grasp. Hurriedly, he lengthened his stride and raced for the door of the wide, boarded-up porch. The door was partly open.

Instantly, he let the girl slide gently downward till her feet touched the topmost step of the porch. There was no sign of life or action within. But Phelps had a queer, warning feeling that a living human being was inside there, watching him from impenetrable blackness. His gun jerked swiftly from beneath his streaming slicker. He held the weapon screened from the rain but ready for instant action.

"Come out!" he ordered grimly. "Walk out here to the door—with your hands up!"

A voice began to whimper faintly. "It's me, Dave. Don't shoot!"

The alert coast guardsman saw a figure take shape and loom closer. To his surprise the figure was familiar. It was Tim, the local carpenter who did odd jobs down in the village. He

was unarmed, his hands high above his head, and he was trembling with stark terror.

"I—I didn't kill him! I didn't have nothin' to do with it. I came in here this afternoon to board up them winders in the rear and—"

"Who told you to?"

"Mr. Ridley hired me—the owner. Last thing he told me before he left yesterday on his boat for Miami was: 'Tim I want you to board up the rest of them winders.' It looked stormy this afternoon, so I figgered—"

"What are you doing here at this hour of the night?"

"I—I been doped, I think." Tim quavered. He kept glancing back fearfully over his shoulder toward the darkness of the dance hall. "I found a bottle o' liquor in the pantry an' I took a slug or two—an' I musta gone out like a light. When I woke up, it was pitch-dark, so I come up to the front—the big room where they dance in summer. I switched on the light and—"

"Well?"

"I seen him! Clem Daly, the watchman. Dead on the floor." He glanced queerly at Rita Daly and gulped. "His face all caved in, blood all over him."

Phelps stepped forward and the trembling carpenter clawed at his rubber sleeve with sudden terror.

"Don't go in," he babbled. "There's a—a ghost in there. I heard it. It put out the light."

Phelps grunted and stuck the barrel of his gun in the shivering carpenter's ribs. "Were the lights on when you first saw the body?"

"I put 'em on. I looked down and seen it was Clem Daly with his head all smashed. And then, without no warnin', the lights went out. For a second I was too scared to move; then I heard the—the ghost. It was upstairs. It walked like a dead man—*clump, clump, clump.* I heard it come straight to the top of the stairs and start to come down."

"I ran out to the front porch here and got the door open—an' then I seen you comin' with the lantern. I was afraid to show myself for fear you might think I was the one who killed Clem Daly. But I didn't, Dave, I swear I didn't!"

Phelps brushed past the cowering man, threw his lantern light into the bare interior of the deserted dance floor. His hand jerked to the wall and he threw the light switch.

Instantly the lights came on.

"I thought you said you didn't turn 'em off?" Phelps snapped.

"I didn't." Tim peered at him, white-faced. "I never touched the lights."

"Where's the body?"

"Over there at the foot of the stairs." His pointing finger wavered and dropped. "It's—it's gone! The body's gone."

Phelps eyed him with cold suspicion. "You're either drunk or lying. Bodies don't get up and walk and turn out lights. There was no corpse here."

"He's not lying, Dave," Rita said in a thin whisper. "I saw my brother at the foot of the stairs. He was dead and—" Her voice broke with horror.

Phelps' hand closed tightly on hers for an instant. There were a couple of dusty folding chairs near one of the boarded windows, and he forced Rita gently downward on one of them. She stared at him dully, like a tragic sleepwalker.

THE coast guardsman strode across the dance floor to where Tim had pointed. He bent over the bare boards and his breath sucked sharply in his throat. There was a darkly irregular spot on the floor where someone had very recently made a hasty effort to wipe up something. In the dust the circular marks of a rag were clearly visible.

There was a tiny blood smear a foot or so away. Beyond it was another—and another. Spaced a foot or so apart, the telltale smears showed the path a man's bloody shoe had taken.

The trail led straight toward the foot of the stairs.

"Is there a telephone line still open here?" Phelps snapped at the trembling carpenter.

Tim nodded, pointed. "Under that hunk of painter's canvas in the corner. The phone men was comin' in tomorrow to disconnect it."

Phelps uncovered the instrument with a quick gesture. He called a number, his eyes steadily on the silent staircase and the blackness above. In a moment he had the cottage of Sheriff Craig. He spoke a few terse sentences to Craig and hung up.

"Stay here with Rita," he told the cowering Tim.

With the lantern swinging from his hand, he went slowly up the stairs. The gun in his right paw was like a steady, upslanting rock.

In a moment, there was a faint click and the upper floor bloomed with sudden illumination. The feet of Dave Phelps made a slow creaking sound as he padded about on the uncarpeted boards. Tim heard a sudden muttered exclamation. In another moment Phelps was hurrying down the staircase.

His eyes were narrowed, puzzled looking. "The smears ended right in the center of the hallway. Whoever made the tracks went no further than the center of the hall—and he didn't come down the stairs again."

"It's a ghost," Tim groaned. "The dead man got up and—and walked into thin air."

"Ghost nothing," Phelps snapped. "There's a killer in this dance pavilion right now. He's upstairs somewhere—trying to hide the corpse, to get rid of the evidence of his crime."

His eyes fastened grimly on the carpenter.

"Is there any way to get up to that attic above the second floor?"

"There's a trapdoor," Tim muttered uneasily. "But—but nothing human could have climbed up there tonight. The ceiling is twelve feet high and the only ladder in the place is—"

"Quick! Where's the ladder?"

"Downstairs here. In the pantry. Behind the cellar stairs."

"Go get it!"

Tim shuddered. "Not me! I ain't anxious to meet no ghost."

Phelps' gun muzzle swung ominously. "Go get the ladder—and get it here fast!"

The frightened Tim disappeared with the speed of a small boy passing a graveyard. In a moment or two he was back, dragging a long, light ladder.

"Take one end of it," Phelps ordered. "We're going upstairs and have a look at that attic."

Tim backed away. Beads of sweat glistened on his pale forehead. He looked startled as a sudden sound echoed outside in the driving rain. It was the harsh squeal of an automobile braking swiftly to a stop.

"The sheriff," Tim gasped. "It's Sheriff Craig."

Rita Daly's face never moved. She sat in the dusty chair where Phelps had placed her and her face was waxen with a dulled horror. Her bloodstained hands hung limply in her lap, and her gaze stayed riveted on them as though they were snakes.

Sheriff Craig hurried in with a quick, nervous step. He was wearing a wrinkled yellow slicker thrown hastily over his pajamas. The laces of his shoes dangled loosely as he walked. He was a short, paunchy man with a bristly brown mustache. He looked ill at ease. In the twelve years he had served as sheriff in the little seaside village, he had never yet been brought face to face with the specter of murder.

He eyed the ladder on the floor. The coast guardsman explained briefly what he had already discovered and Craig blinked. He was obviously nervous as he picked up one end of the ladder.

"I'll lead the way," Phelps said evenly. "Unless I'm crazy, the corpse

of Clem Daly is hidden in the attic—and his murderer is hidden up there with him. There's no possible chance that he could have escaped downstairs again."

"Couldn't he have sneaked out the back door?" the sheriff asked.

"Impossible," Phelps said. "He went up the stairs—but he never came down again. He's up in that attic right now."

THE trapdoor in the second floor ceiling was directly above the last visible stain in the smeared trail that the killer had left. Phelps blessed the mischance that had caused the cunning murderer to smear his inattentive shoe in the blood of his victim.

The height of the trapdoor puzzled the eager coast guardsman. It was fully twelve feet above the floor. How could the vanishing murderer have scaled that height and carried a dead man with him? There was no sign of chair, table, anything on which he could have climbed.

Craig steadied the ladder that Tim had found on the lower floor. Phelps went swiftly up the shaky rungs. The trapdoor was fastened on its upper surface. But a couple of well-aimed shots from Phelps' gun shattered the light wood and he was able to rip a board away. Reaching up, he unhooked the fastening and the trapdoor swung open.

No pistol shot roared in the dark attic as Phelps' head lifted cautiously through the square opening. His long legs snaked upward out of sight. The faint rasp of a match sounded and there was a yellow gleam of light above the opening.

"See anything?" Craig called.

Phelps' muffled voice sounded queerly triumphant.

"Come on up, Craig! Hurry it up! There's more than murder to this."

His hands caught the arms of the ascending sheriff and yanked him in one strong heave through the opening.

"Look!" he called. "See here!"

The flame of his match showed a dark, wet patch on the bare dusty boards of the attic flooring.

"Blood," Craig muttered. "Fresh blood."

"Right. And there's the ladder he used. See it? Over there alongside the chimney wall. See how he managed it? He came down from the attic to make his kill. He left the ladder standing under the open trapdoor while he sneaked downstairs. That's how he was able to get himself and the corpse back so neatly."

"Where the devil could he have gone?" Craig whispered, his eyes stabbing alertly through the gloomy light from the burning match.

"He went through that little door at the end of the eaves," Phelps said softly. "He couldn't have gone anywhere else. He's hiding up there in the inn's tower—that tall lighthouse tower that Ridley built for his fool searchlight display every summer."

The match in Phelps' fingers sputtered out and he lit another. Craig struck one and held the flame forward. He was tiptoeing toward the small door in the eaves when the sharp whisper of Phelps recalled him.

"Look at those piled bales in the corner, sheriff. I ripped one of 'em open. Do you see now what may be behind all this mystery?"

The sheriff looked. "Silk!" he gasped in a low voice.

He stared at the gaping bale that Phelps' knife had slit open. The name of the silk mill was plainly decipherable: *Patterson Raw Silk Corporation.* The bales were piled four deep almost up to the roof.

"Stolen silk," Craig breathed. "Four truckloads of it stolen on the roads of this county in the last month. Vanished into thin air—stolen and no trace of it ever found. And hidden here all the while, every last ounce of it."

Phelps' face looked pale in the yellow glow of the matches that he kept striking with monotonous regularity.

"That's what Clem Daly must have meant," he muttered, "when he told Rita that he was going to make money—heaps and heaps of it. The filthy swine! He took advantage of his job here as watchman in order to store the stolen silk until he could dispose of it. Never did like Daly."

"But who killed him?" Craig asked. "If Rita didn't— Could Tim have done it? Was all his terror and ghost talk a clever stunt to—"

"Listen!" Phelps whispered suddenly.

A queer scream echoed shrilly high over their heads. It sounded like the high-pitched wail of a woman. Masked by the drum of the rain and the howls of the wind, it whimpered unevenly, horribly.

"The tower!" Craig gasped. "The roof of the tower!"

Together they rushed to the closed door set flush in the slanting eaves. Phelps' hand threw it swiftly open. It was pitch-dark inside the steep tower. But their eyes, accustomed to the gloom, could make out the shadowy wooden steps that wound aloft in a dusty spiral to the unseen top of the tower, forty feet above their heads.

High above the sound of the gale they could still hear that shrill, screaming wall. It stopped suddenly as Phelps raced up the steps, closely followed by the panting form of the bulky Craig.

A closed door barred their way at the top.

"Stay here," Phelps whispered. "If he gets by me and tries to blast his way down the stairs—blow him apart!"

His own gun jutted grimly in his grasp. With a quick wrench he threw the door open and sprang outside on the open roof of the tower.

"Did you get him, Dave?" Craig roared. "Is he out there?"

"No!" Phelps' puzzled voice shouted thinly. The wind whipped the sound away and made it hardly audible. "Come on out here for a second."

CRAIG ducked his head to the wind and sprang out on the parapet. Rain slanted at him in blinding sheets that stung like hail. The wind was a great clutching hand that buffeted at the sheriff. It slapped him dizzily sideways, whirled him so that he could scarcely breathe on the exposed platform of the tower.

To his amazement, he could see only the tall figure of the coast guardsman. Except for Phelps and himself, there was nothing living or dead on the tower top. Air and beach —even the foaming surge of the distant surf—were completely blotted out by the driving fury of the storm.

"Could—could he have thrown the body off—and jumped?" Craig asked, his face streaming with rain. "This thing is madness." He fought his way back to the shelter of the doorway. His voice roared indistinctly. "Only an angel—or a sailor—could get away from a tower like this, without breaking his neck."

"Eh? What's that?" Phelps whirled in the blackness, his face a peering blur. "A sailor? Of course! We've been blind fools!"

He was staring upward over his head at the steel rigging that held the metal stanchions of the searchlight housing. A wolfish gleam came into his wide eyes. He whirled and dashed for the doorway, almost hurling Craig down the winding stairs in his fierce eagerness.

"Quick! We've got to get downstairs and out—out on the beach!"

"Huh? Did—did you see him?"

"I saw the block," Phelps howled, his voice a mere thread in the roaring wind. "That scream we heard a minute ago was the squeak of a pulley in a block! It's fastened to the brace-rods of the searchlight housing. The murderer lowered himself and the corpse with a block and tackle. Then he must have shaken his damned sailor knot

loose from below. He's down on the beach right now! He can't be anywhere else!"

Phelps sprang down the tower steps in long, eager strides. The ladder was still propped under the gaping trapdoor but Phelps ignored it. He hung for an instant from the trapdoor frame and dropped to the floor below with a lithe thud.

With a set face and a gun snout gleaming in his big hand, he raced past the startled faces of Tim and the girl. Rita cried out weakly, but he didn't hear her.

The wind and rain slashed at him, but he lowered his head and raced straight for the howling blackness of the beach. He took the water-steaming steps across the stone breakwater in two wild leaps.

Above his head the tall tower of Seaside Inn was a dark blot against the inky sky. The beach itself was a smear of impenetrable darkness. Phelps ranged slowly seaward in ever widening circles, his body bent close to the rain-swept sand.

Suddenly he tensed. He was staring at a tangled coil of heavy rope. He saw the trampled tracery of heavy footsteps in the wet sand. The deeply marked prints disappeared in the darkness in a straggling uneven line toward the rush and tumble of the surf.

Phelps had barely taken a half-dozen steps when a spurt of flame split the darkness in front of him. A bullet whistled shrilly above his head.

He threw himself grimly forward —and fell headlong over an inert something in the sand. It was a battered body lying flat on its face. Fiercely he heaved at the shoulders. It was the dead Clem Daly.

Again, the snarling spurt of flame crashed from the darkness ahead. Phelps bent his knees instantly and went flat on the sand. But only for an instant. The coast guardsman wriggled sideways and leaped to his feet. The killer was at bay. Hemmed in between the coast guardsman and the roaring fury of the Atlantic, he could depend no longer on stealth and evasion. He would have to kill now—or be killed.

Phelps could make out more clearly the dark blob of the fugitive fleeing form. The man was running drunkenly, humped low above the sand like an enormous frog. A sudden flash of lightning illuminated him for a dazzling instant as he whirled, his gun streaking flame.

The coast guardsman staked his life on a bold, impetuous rush. He flung himself heedlessly forward. His plunging attack carried him like a thunderbolt against the murderer's hip and knee. They fell in a tangle together, rolling over and over in a fierce thrashing struggle that threw wet sand flying in soggy spurts.

The butt of the killer's gun drove Phelps' face into the sand, almost choking him. But he managed to clear his eyes with a desperate sweep of his left hand and to roll clear for an instant.

His own gun swung upward in a swift arc and crashed with stunning impact on the skull of his snarling foe. With a groan of agony, the killer collapsed.

Phelps rolled the limp body over. He stared intently into the unconscious face a few inches under his.

"A sailor," he muttered. "Craig's guess was right."

Out of the darkness, a cautious figure came creeping closer. It was the sheriff. He eyed the murderer and seemed to nod faintly.

"Ridley. It's—It's Ridley himself!"

"It sure is," Phelps said. "Ridley himself—the foxy owner of Seaside Inn. That boat trip of his to Miami was just a blind. He never left the inn. He was hidden up in the attic—waiting for the chance to kill Clem Daly and protect himself—from blackmail, probably."

"A sailor," Craig muttered. "I said the killer was a sailor to get away from the tower like that."

Phelps nodded sternly. "And if you know of a better amateur seaman along this coast, I'd like to know his name. Here, give me a hand with him."

They carried Ridley into the bare dance hall of the inn and flung his unconscious body sprawling to the floor.

"There's your murderer," Phelps told Rita Daly very gently.

The girl was silent, white-faced.

"Ridley himself planted that drugged liquor here," the coast guardsman said slowly. "He pretended to sail on his boat for Miami, but he sneaked back here with the cold-blooded determination to kill your brother and retain all the profits from a half-dozen stolen silk shipments. There's a big mortgage on the inn and he must have been desperately hard up for money."

Ridley's black, snakelike eyes were wide open, staring with a quiet, devilish hatred at his alert captors. Craig's gun muzzle was a steady promise of what the law held in store for Mr. Richard Ridley.

Phelps turned toward the girl.

Rita's eyes were streaming suddenly with tears. She began to sob brokenly as the coast guard's brown hands tightened protectively over hers.

"I—I know now that my—my unfortunate brother was a—a thief," she whispered. "Knowing that, I can bear somehow the thought of his—death. But it terrifies me, Dave, to feel so utterly alone, so—"

"Alone?" Phelps said shortly.

His arm crept about her slim, shaking shoulders and tensed with a proudly possessive gesture.

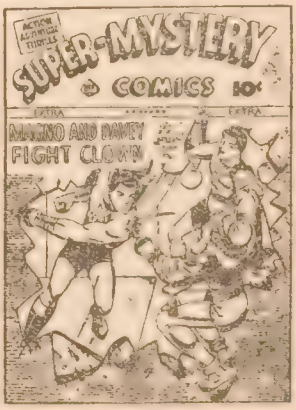
"You'll never be alone, Rita," he said huskily. "Not if you—don't want to be."

Rita sighed. Her body swayed toward the protection of Phelps' arms.

You'll Be Struck By Lightning!

Of course we mean **FLASH LIGHTNING**, that daring man of miracles who hurls live lightning bolts at his enemies and streaks through space with the speed of an electric current, regularly, in a full length action-color story in **LIGHTNING COMICS**. You get this whale of a feature, plus THE RAVEN, MARVO, HAP HAZARD and all your other favorite features in this bargain book now on sale at all newsstands for only 10c!

Don't Miss This Extra!



In this bang-up number of **SUPER-MYSTERY COMICS** you'll find MAGNO, The Magnetic Man, and his gallant pal, DAVEY, again fighting that arch terror of all times—THE CLOWN! You'll find the latest adventures of VULCAN, THE BLACK SPIDER, CAPTAIN GALLANT, and a host of others.
Buy SUPER-MYSTERY COMICS for the biggest dime's worth on the newsstands. And all in full-color action pictures!

Henry York thought he had an unbeatable plan to get in the chips, but he hadn't counted on the transparent evidence of a . . .

Crystal Clue

By Leon Dupont

NERVES as cold and tempered as hard steel, Henry York went quietly up the stairs. He was surprised at his calmness — and pleased. A man about to kill someone needed steady nerves. And Henry York was about to commit murder.

He could see his victim—his Uncle Walter York—as he sat in his room near the head of the stairs. The old man was reading. Henry knocked upon the jamb and walked through the open doorway.

"Good evening, Henry," greeted his uncle in a precise, fretful voice.

"What's good about it, uncle?" A leer twisted Henry's mouth. He knew what was good about it. Before the hour was done, he would be a millionaire. He was old York's only heir.

"Nothing—nothing," growled the elder York. "But isn't it usually 'good morning' and 'good evening' and good this and good that? Bah!"

Henry sauntered carelessly about the room. It was large, expensively furnished. He looked at the old-fashioned, but comfortable, bed. Silken covers. Henry would sleep there tomorrow night, if things went right. Went right? How could they go wrong? Henry was so sure of himself, that he was tingling in anticipation. He had worked out his scheme from every angle. He could see no chance of a slip-up. He had planned the perfect crime.

Uncle Walt failed to see his nephew take from under his coat a heavy robe, unfold it, creep stealthily up behind his chair.

Henry dropped the thick, matlike fabric over his uncle's head, pulled it tight with a rapid jerk.

The elder York uttered a gurgling squawk which was muffled by the choking hood. His book went spinning, his feet flew up. His hands clawed at the suffocating folds.

Henry caught the clutching fingers with one powerful hand, while his other elbow locked under the old man's chin. Not too tightly—for there must be no marks of violence. Just enough to cut off the flow of air under the thick robe.

It took all of Henry's brute strength to hold his squirming, kicking victim until he at least ceased his death struggle. York made certain that the thing was well done. For ten minutes he kept air from the lungs of Uncle Walter.

The job was finished. York sighed in relief, commenced to straighten the rug where the dying man had kicked folds into it. He put the cushion back straight in the chair, removed every sign of the struggle from the room, carried the death robe to his own chamber.

He looked at his watch. Seven forty-five. Stooping, he lifted the body and carried it into the adjoining bathroom. While the water ran in the tub, he removed the dead man's clothing, hung it near the tub as he had seen Uncle Walter hang it many times before.

York tested the water. It must be at the usual temperature—neither too hot nor too cold. Satisfied, he lifted the white body and put it into the tub.

This was to be the perfect crime. Gingerly York scrubbed his victim's body, until the water was blue with dissolved soap. He was careful to remove his own fingerprints from the tub, from the faucet levers, to substitute those of his dead uncle. He even splashed water here and there around the tub.

Now for the final move. York lifted the body to its dangling feet, moved it backward, a slow-motion fall. He took one of the man's wrists, dragged the hand over the rack where hung the clothes, slid them to the floor. That was all part of the plan. Then, before he let the body into the water, York rapped the back of the head against the edge of the tub—hard.

After that, with the corpse's head under water, Henry pressed on the sunken chest. By working the lungs like a bellows, he was able to draw water into them.

York bent over the clothes, found the dead man's watch. He twisted the hands of the timepiece until they pointed to the hour of nine-fifty, then pounded the floor with it until it stopped. He broke the crystal, wedged a piece of glass against the hands. Wiping off the fingerprints, he restored it to Uncle Walt's watch pocket.

The job was done. Carefully, York searched for flaws. He examined minutely every inch of the bathroom and the bedroom—where the actual crime had been committed. He even looked through the pages of the book his uncle had been reading, finally restored it to the case near the hearth. There must be nothing to point to murder. It must seem that Walter York had slipped in his bathtub, had struck his head upon the edge and drowned while unconscious.

DRESSED for evening, Henry York left the house, after turning out all lights except those in his uncle's death chambers. Then he got in his car, backed noisily down the driveway and slipped into traffic.

The evening was spent with friends—men whose testimony, if it were required, would be unquestionable. It was after midnight when Henry finally turned into his uncle's driveway and put the car into the garage. Whistling a strained tune, he entered the house, looked around. Everything seemed as he had left it.

He went upstairs, going against his will into his uncle's room, into the bathroom. Nothing had been touched. Sickened, but telling himself that such a move was absolutely necessary, York put a hand into the bathtub, felt the stiffened form of Uncle Walt. He lifted it, refusing to look, and let it sink back into the tub.

Leaving his hand wet, he went to the phone and called the dead man's physician—Dr. Leeds. He wouldn't call the cops until a few minutes later.

While he waited the time for calling the police, he entered the kitchen and filled a glass at the faucet over the sink, drank to soothe his dry throat.

He took the glass down, caught at his throat with a gasp. What a taste. Confound it, the health department had put another shot of chlorine disinfectant into the water.

He rang for the police. They came almost half a minute after the family doctor rang the bell and was admitted by the pale-faced nephew of the dead man.

The doctor pronounced death as Henry knew he would—strangulation by drowning. Then the police entered and took charge.

They seemed disinterested. There were three of them, two radio car patrolmen—harness dicks—and a detective who had come with them from headquarters. They circled through the house, looking things over with a casual eye. The detective, Davis by

name, showed particular interest at what he saw in the bathroom.

"Dragged his clothes down when he fell," he mused. "Say, doc, how long do you say the old boy has been dead?"

"Three or four hours. Hard to tell exactly. The water in the tub is cold, and the body is stiff. That would take place within a very few hours. Why?"

"Oh, nothing." Davis was inspecting the clothing. He drew out the watch with the shattered front, grunted, "Watch stopped at nine-fifty. Face broken when it fell."

Detective Davis got up, looked at York. "Where you been?"

York told his story, putting in nothing to betray his guilty knowledge. This was to be the perfect crime. Nothing could—nothing *would*—go wrong.

The detective continued his search. Henry York went into the parlor, sat by the fireplace, and moodily smoked his pipe. But instead of thinking about the death of his uncle, he was dreaming of tomorrow, when he would be his own boss, a rich man. Presently he dozed.

Detective Davis' stern voice wakened him. He was startled to see the three officers and the doctor about him, an unfriendly stare in each eye.

"York, you're under arrest for murder," rasped Davis, "for killing old Walter York!"

"Under arrest! For murder! Why—"

Henry York controlled his wild thoughts, steeled himself to meet what might come. He could breast out the storm. They hadn't a thing on him. There was nothing he had failed to do to safeguard his crime. They were merely bluffing.

He had heard that the police did this to suspects—grilled them, cross-examined them, forced them to answer incriminating questions. Well, he knew his story, and he would stick to it. He smiled, glared about him defiantly.

"I don't know what you're talking about."

"No?" Davis smiled. "York, when did you leave this house tonight?"

"I told you once—eight o'clock. Maybe a few minutes after."

"What was your uncle doing?"

"Why reading, I think. I believe I can show you the exact book."

"You needn't. York, your uncle was killed before eight-thirty. In fact, only a few minutes after eight. He couldn't possibly have undressed, drawn his bath, washed himself before you say you left him—reading!" Davis' tone was heavy with sarcasm. "Why did you lie about this, if you didn't kill him?"

"I didn't lie, I tell you! I—"

"Tell him what will send him to the chair, doc," ordered Davis.

"Perhaps you know, York," said Dr. Leeds, after clearing his throat, "that there is a chlorine disinfectant in the water? It was put in about ten minutes to eight. I was present, and I know. It was probably in all the mains within thirty minutes. And the water in your uncle's bathtub hasn't any chlorine in it. We tested it."

Suddenly ill, but yet unconvinced, Henry York blinked. "Chlorine? You tested? I don't quite— Say, why did you go to all that trouble after you said uncle died by drowning?"

"So you want to know where you slipped?" grated Davis. His glance searched York's inscrutable face closely as he continued: "That watch in your uncle's fob pocket had some dents on the edge—deep dents, showing that it had had some rough usage. Probably to make it stop. But the thing that did you up, York was—"

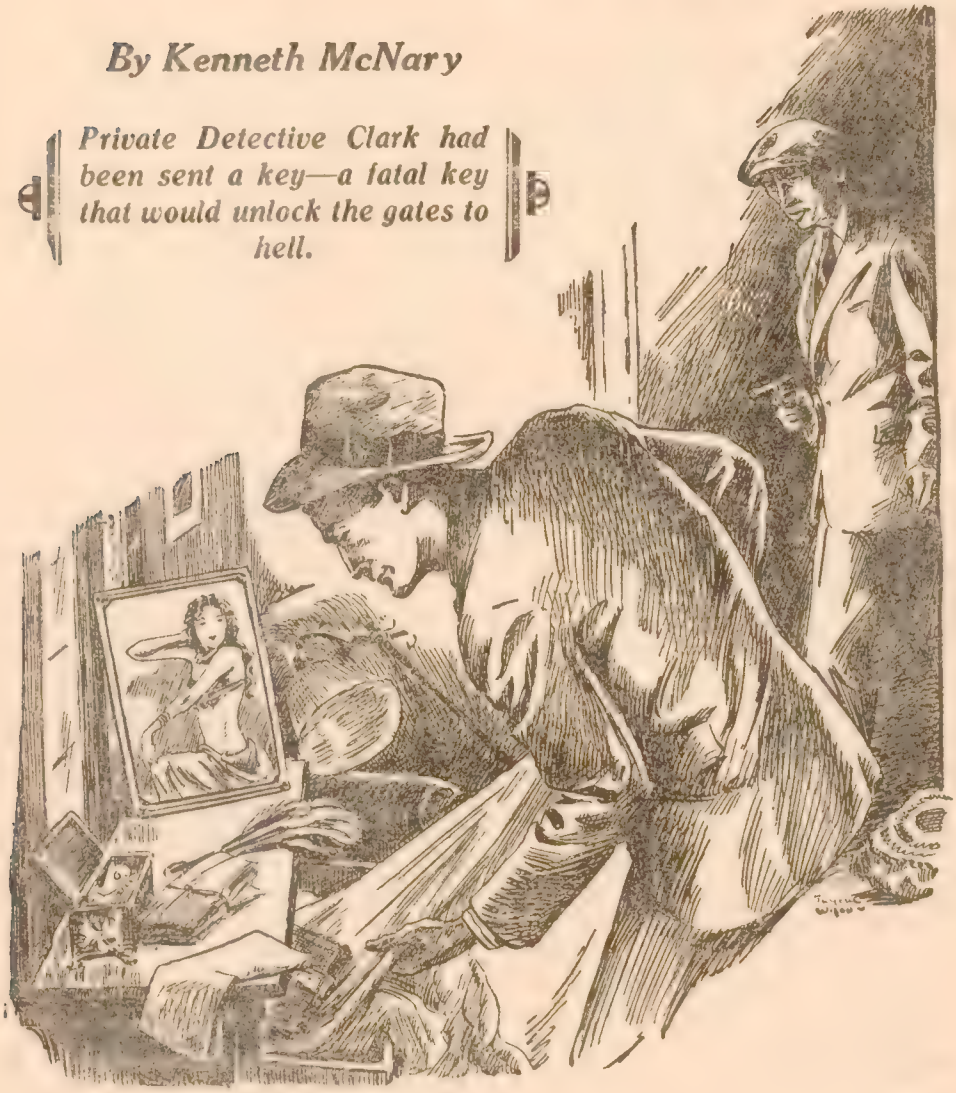
"Yes?" Tight though his throat had suddenly become, York managed to hiss the single word.

"You know how people wear their watches with the faces against them to protect the crystals? Well, when you replaced the watch after stopping it, you put it in with the face forward, instead of against the lining of your uncle's trousers!"

Homicide Legacy

By Kenneth McNary

Private Detective Clark had been sent a key—a fatal key that would unlock the gates to hell.



ALAN CLARK'S brows drew together in a puzzled frown. He read the note again.

If the finder will deliver the enclosed key to Detective Alan Clark, personally, in his office at 103 Dover Street, he will receive a liberal cash reward.

The script was a hastily penciled scrawl done with a woman's bright red lipstick on plain brown wrapping paper. Obviously it was executed under great stress.

The private detective cast a speculative eye on the small, grinning urchin who had brought him the note.

"Where did you get this, sonny?" he asked, and waved a dollar bill.

The boy smiled as his shining eyes followed the money. "I picked it up on Christopher Street in front of the

ladies' jail. Gee—thanks, Mister!" The kid grabbed the reward and ran.

On Christopher Street in front of the women's prison, Clark took cognizance of this important fact. He pictured a harried inmate of the prison, scribbling the note, weighing it with the key, and flinging it through the bars.

Perhaps the key was needed as evidence against the prisoner. More likely she was saving it to prove her innocence. Or perhaps the key opened the way to a pillaged fortune.

Clark examined the note again before depositing it in his files. He turned his attention to the key. It was a small flat, ordinary instrument. Except for an etched letter and numeral—G-41—there was nothing to distinguish it from countless others.

Suddenly the door banged open. Clark's fist closed on the key as a squat, overdressed, heavy-shouldered man swaggered in, flanked by two tall men every bit as sinister in appearance. Clark's face betrayed no emotion though he recognized all three.

The short man was Pete Lynch, supposed leader of a band of rowdies. The two men with him were his trusted cronies, "Slug" Nixon and "Butch" Scott.

Lynch's pockmarked face was his misfortune, it was so readily recognizable.

Clark's clenched hands were on the desk. He leaned forward, polite inquiry in his arched brows and slightly inclined head.

A pugnacious leer masked Lynch's swart features. He thrust his repulsive face forward.

"Where's the key the kid just gave you?" he asked.

Clark shifted his clenched hands and succeeded in putting the little key into the open inkstand, unobserved.

"Sorry," the detective said, "I don't know what you're talking about."

There was a flat-topped desk and low wood rail between Lynch and the detective, but that did not stop the hoodlum. He swung a clenched fist at Clark's jaw. The detective pulled back. His hand sped to the gun in his shoulder holster, but was frozen even as the fingers grasped the butt.

For the black muzzle of a blue steel automatic suddenly showed from under the light coat, draped with such studied carelessness, over Slug Nixon's arm.

Clark had no choice. Slug would as soon blast a man as light a cigarette. That was his reputation. The detective was disarmed.

"Where's the key?" Lynch gritted. "We know you got it, 'cause the kid is yapping his head off about the dollar you gave him for it."

Clark shrugged. "I've told you, Lynch, I don't know what it's all about."

Lynch's fist shot out, smashed the detective on the mouth. Clark tasted his own blood on his lips. But he was covered by Slug, besides being outnumbered three to one. For the moment, discretion ruled Clark.

"You won't talk, eh?"

CLARK was herded into a corner. Lynch's thick lips were twisted in a hateful leer. He sank a heavy fist in Clark's mid-section. The detective's body bent double from the force of the blow. Instantly Lynch slammed a hard right to Clark's lowered head.

Clark staggered. He tripped over Slug's maliciously outthrust foot and fell heavily.

"Will you talk?" Lynch panted. "Will you tell us what you did with that key?"

Clark did not answer.

"Think you can play dead on me, eh?" Lynch snapped.

He stepped forward, hauled the detective to his feet. He grasped Clark's arms from behind, pinned them effectively.

"Spoil that pretty mug of his!" Lynch called to Butch Scott. "That'll make 'im talk!"

Slug pocketed his pistol, grasped

Clark by the hair, while the detective struggled. Then Butch lowered his close-cropped bullet skull and butted Clark between the eyes.

The detective drew back, despite the painful hold Slug had on his hair. Butch's solid skull caromed off Clark's head like a billiard ball.

Butch stepped back for another charge. Clark suddenly lost all sense of caution. His fighting instinct overwhelmed cold reasoning. As Butch lunged Clark caught him in the chest with a well-placed kick. The impact of Butch's hurling body caused all four to fall in a tangle of arms and legs.

Clark rolled away and gained his feet in a bound. Free of the hoodlums' hold, he threshed out in the close quarters. Clark knew the satisfaction of drawing blood. Then a sudden rush halted him. Butch and Slug pinioned Clark's arms.

With a wicked gleam in his killer's eyes, Slug reached for his gun. He aimed the weapon at the detective's heart.

"Look out, gents," he chuckled. "I'm gonna let 'im have it!"

Lynch shouted stormily. "Don't, you slug-nutty gorilla! This guy ain't any good to us dead!"

Slug snickered. He reversed the gun, brought the butt down on Clark's head.

When Clark came to, his dazed eyes beheld the damage done by Pete Lynch and his crew in their search for the key. The contents of drawers were strewn everywhere, chairs overturned, pictures ripped off the walls.

Clark arose painfully. His head ached from Slug Nixon's blow. Blood caked his face and neck.

He reeled to his desk and grasped the edge. He was almost afraid to look in the inkwell. His fingers encountered the little key on the inkstand's bottom. Luckily the desk had not been overturned. He put the key in his pocket.

Clark's bruised head hurt intolerably, but at last he succeeded in setting his wrecked office in order.

He was sitting with his heels on his desk, a gun ready in his hand, and his chair tilted back at a comfortable angle, when there was a knock at the door.

The detective dropped his gun out of sight, sat up in his chair, began to pore over a sheaf of paper to give the impression of a busy office. He called a cheery "Come in."

A woman entered. A willowy, heavily veiled woman with the grace of a dancer.

"You are Private Detective Alan Clark?" she asked as Clark got up.

"I'm Alan Clark," he admitted. His voice held a question.

"Pardon me if I disturbed you," she apologized. "But it's really terribly important. I'm Joan Hallet."

"And how, Miss Hallet, may I be of service to you?"

She accepted Clark's proffered chair.

"I've come to see you about—the key," she said.

CLARK'S brow wrinkled. "A little while ago, I was released from cell six, on the third floor of the Christopher Street wing of the women's prison," she said.

Cell six, third floor, Christopher Street wing. Clark made mental note of it. This subject of the key seemed liberally laden with dynamite. Clark proceeded cautiously.

"Of course, you can—ah—describe this key?" Clark rubbed a reflective thumb on his strong chin.

"Of course!" she smiled, and for a moment Clark had no thought except of the lovely face.

But Clark was primarily a detective. It behooved him to be practical. The woman had declared the key to be "terribly important" and Clark was inclined to agree with her. Pete Lynch and his friends were actively interested. Whatever the secret of the key, its value was great to

have aroused the interest of the Lynch hoods.

"Please describe it," Clark requested.

"It is plain and flat," the woman began. "It is two inches long and perhaps a quarter inch wide. It has four teeth, two large and two small. And—oh, yes. G-41 is stamped on it."

The lady evidently was the owner of the key. Still Clark was vaguely uncertain. People do not usually memorize every characteristic of such an ordinary instrument as a key.

As the detective still hesitated, his visitor laughed.

"I see I have not misjudged you," she said. "I realize that all the nice things the newspapers said about you the other day are true. You're cautious, thorough, and an honest worker. I'm glad I entrusted the key into your keeping."

Clark said: "Tell me more." His lips were tight. His doubts seemed without foundation—but there was the note written with bright-red lipstick on brown wrapping paper. If she knew about the note—

"One of the matrons had been bought by some sinister outside forces who are after the key. She searched me repeatedly and watched me like a hawk. I evaded her for a time, but I had no idea how long I'd be kept in jail. I was afraid that woman would find the key eventually. So when I saw my chance, I wrapped the key in a piece of brown paper and threw it out of my window—with a note to you, of course!"

"And the note read?"

The lady repeated the text word for word. Considering the intense mental distress of the woman at the time the note was written, Clark thought it would have been more convincing had his caller made a little mistake in the telling.

Nevertheless he was forced to admit the note might have been planned long before the opportunity to write it presented itself. Thus it would have allowed ample opportunity to memorize the content.

"I guess you're the owner, all right," he admitted.

Without another word, his beautiful visitor drew a large roll of bills from her bag. She counted off several and handed them to the detective.

A growing perplexity clouded his brow as he calculated the total. "A thousand dollars!" he exclaimed. "That's a lot of money for such a small service."

"It's all right," she assured him. "It was worth it to me."

It was too much, Clark thought. True, he had been given a painful beating, but that was not his client's business. He racked his brain for a possible ulterior motive for the overwhelming generosity of his mysterious client. Suddenly he remembered one last salient factor.

"In what medium was the note written," he inquired evenly. "Pen, pencil, chalk?"

Clark's beautiful visitor did not falter. "It was written in red pencil," she replied.

She could remember every word of the note, yet she had forgotten the note was written in red lipstick. Forgotten? Not likely. She never knew. That was it; she never knew, never wrote the note.

Clark saw how she had come by her information. She was in league with the Lynch toughs. The men had found the note in their search for the key, had decided on this strategy. They had copied the note word for word, noticing even that it was on a piece of ordinary brown paper. But, manlike, the lipstick was just plain red pencil to them.

CLARK got up. He laid the money on the desk in front of his enchanting visitor. Indirectly he had already conceded the fact he had the precious key. There would be no point in denying it now. He said flatly:

"Sorry, Miss Hallet. We can't do business."

There was a short moment of silence. Then—

"How much do you want?" the woman asked. Her voice, Clark noticed, had lost much of its musical quality.

"Name your own figure," she added. "I must have the key!"

"The key is not for sale," the detective replied.

Again silence. Then the woman stood up. She asked in a low voice: "Is that final?"

Clark nodded. "It's final!"

The woman put the money in her bag. When she snapped it shut, Clark saw she had extracted a revolver.

"I'll trouble you for the key, Mr. Clark!" Her voice was harsh now.

The detective made no show of emotion. Though he knew there was nothing deadlier than a woman with a purpose—and a pistol—his outward demeanor was cold.

"A while ago, Miss Hallet," he said, "three ugly customers came here demanding the key, though perhaps you know that already. They beat me up, because I refused to give any information. I rather expected them back again, so I took the precaution of hiring a crack shot as an assistant.

"Look behind you, Miss Hallet—my assistant's gun is trained on your back!"

Involuntarily the woman turned, though she must have sensed it was a subterfuge. Clark's hard fingers closed on his visitor's gun arm. The woman's teeth sank into the detective's brown skin through the fine mesh of her veil. A cry of pain and anger escaped him.

With his free hand, Clark dashed the pistol from her grasp. It clattered noisily to the floor. He pulled up her head, jerked off her veil and found time to wonder how nature could have created a thing so lovely—and so fiendish. He opened the door, propelled his visitor over the threshold.

Clark's bandaged hand was wrapped comfortably around the butt of the gun in his coat pocket when he left the office a short while later. The veiled lady had been remarkably well informed. In her desperate endeavor to convince him of her right to the key, she had unwittingly given him a concrete clue to work upon.

He was certain the rightful owner of the precious key had been, for a while at least, an inmate of Cell 6, third tier, Christopher Street wing of the woman's prison, just as the veiled beauty had intimated.

The head matron of the women's prison was very kind to Alan Clark.

"And what is it now, Alan Clark?" she asked good-naturedly.

"Mrs. Mooney," the detective said, "would it be presuming on too short an acquaintance—I've known you only seventeen years—"

"Since you went to school with my Patrick." The matron beamed.

"That's right." He lowered his voice to a whisper. "Who occupied Cell 6 on the third tier of the Christopher Street wing, at about eleven this morning?"

Mrs. Mooney looked around casually. "Sure it's nice of you to visit me, Alan, me boy; 'tis a fine friend you are." Then she gritted in an undertone: "I'll call you in an hour."

Clark paced the confines of his office restlessly. An hour had passed, and another, still no call from Mrs. Mooney.

The detective lit a cigarette, inhaled deeply. The phone began to ring. He grasped the receiver eagerly. It was the prison matron.

"Sure an' I got to the phone quick as I could," she apologized. "The name of the woman in Cell 6 this morning—"

"Yes?"

"On the third floor of the Christopher Street wing—"

"Yes! Yes!"

"Is Joan Hallet!"

Joan Hallet. The name the gorgeous hell-cat had given him. Clark cradled the receiver with a look of

blank despair on his face. It was a dead end.

The detective smoked a cigarette in deep concentration. He picked up the two-day-old newspaper that carried an account of his exploit in rounding up a band of jewel thiefs, for which job he had been hired by an insurance company.

He turned the pages idly. On the theatrical page, he read a rave notice about the latest triumph of Doris Adair, starring in a new drama at the Paradise. There was a large, two-column cut of the beautiful and talented actress.

Clark had read the story before. The haunting picture of her had lingered in his memory. He read the item with renewed interest. Long ago, he had known her brother. But the brother's name was Hallet, he thought vaguely.

Then he remembered suddenly—Joan Hallet was Doris Adair's real name.

WITH the newspaper in his pocket, Clark dashed from the office, back to the prison matron. He confronted her with the newspaper picture of the actress.

"Sure," Mrs. Mooney readily admitted. "That's the lady!"

So Doris Adair was mixed up in this. He taxied back to his office.

Poor Doris—her life was an unhappy one since her young millionaire husband crashed to his death in his airplane. Every relative with a claim sought to defraud Doris of her dower rights.

The actress had said that she had a will, which made her sole heir to the deceased's millions. Perhaps schemes were afoot to keep Doris out of the way until disposition of the estate.

Clark glanced at his watch. It was six o'clock, just time to change to a tuxedo, eat a leisurely dinner, and view Doris' performance at the Paradise. After that, the detective planned to send his card backstage and talk with the actress.

When Clark opened the door to his apartment, he was startled to see the place lighted and in great disorder. He whirled, drew his pistol quickly.

"No need for that, my friend," came a suave voice behind him.

The detective turned cautiously. There was a man standing in the shadow of a window drape. The visitor stepped into the light, a strongly built man, faultlessly dressed, with a stiff bristle of mustache and the air of one accustomed to command—and being obeyed.

The stranger said smoothly: "I am Wilson Drake."

There was a vast surprise in the detective's eyes. "Wilson Drake!" he exclaimed. "Here! Under these circumstances!"

Very casually Drake snapped open a handsome gold cigarette case. Clark declined the proffered smoke. Drake tapped his leisurely on the flat of the case, then lit it.

"Look here, old man," purred Drake through a cloud of exhaled smoke. "I'm prepared to pay ten thousand dollars—for the key."

Clark was startled. Wilson Drake, a leader in state politics, maker of governors, breaker of hearts—wanted the key.

Clark sat down heavily, a vague feeling of unrest in the pit of his stomach.

"Ten thousand dollars!" He drew his handkerchief across his forehead.

A lot of money. That world cruise he had often dreamed about could become a reality; that bigger and better equipped office, too. He relaxed, lit a cigarette, drew a deep inhalation. A lot of money. Yet—

There was the trust someone had placed in him—someone with a vast belief in his integrity. Clark, private detective.

"The key is not for sale."

Drake's stony features never altered. "Perhaps you didn't get the name," he suggested coldly. "It's Wilson—"

"Drake," Clark finished. "Who you are doesn't cut any ice with me, Mr. Drake. I've been handed an assignment. I'll do the best I can with it."

Drake shook his head. "The best you can do," he said, "is to take ten thousand dollars, hand over the key, and forget about the whole business. Or suffer the consequences of being—too honest—shall we say?"

"When I'm right, Mr. Drake, I don't scare worth a damn!" Clark shot quickly. "You've spoken your piece. Now I'll say mine. You've broken into my apartment with the intention of stealing. That's known on the phone blotter as—"

"That's where you're wrong!" Drake interrupted. "When I got here half an hour ago, the door had been forced, the place was disordered, as you see it now—"

"Then perhaps a burglar made off with the key after all!" Clark bluffed.

Drake shook his head. "No, he didn't," he said. "I surprised the burglar at work. I had a gun in my hand. The burglar leaped out of the window onto the fire escape. He swung for the ladder, but hit his hand on the rail—and missed the ladder. They carried his body away not ten minutes ago."

There was a momentary pause.

"Any identification?" Clark asked.

Drake shrugged. "The man was Butch Scott."

DEATH had robbed Pete Lynch of a henchman. Clark realized he could expect no quarter from Lynch now, key or no key. He was notoriously swift to avenge his men. Clark was only the indirect cause of Butch's death, but as far as Lynch was concerned, the detective might as well have shot Butch Scott.

"I ask you to reconsider my offer," Drake urged.

"The answer is no."

"If I raise the ante?"

"No!"

Drake's eyes were points of hate. "Your life isn't worth a plugged nickel," he said. He strode toward the door. But Clark's derisive laughter nettled the powerful politician. He spun on his heel.

"I'll take the key from your dead body!" he threatened. He stormed out, slammed shut the door with a bang.

An instant later Clark was startled by the hurried tattoo of gunfire on the other side of the door. It stopped as suddenly as it had started. Then came that awful hush, even more fearful by contrast.

It flashed through Clark's mind that Drake had made good his threat in a hurry. He wondered what kept his knees from buckling. He passed a hand over his face, suddenly mottled with sweat. It probed his chest and stomach, fully expecting to feel hot blood on his fingers. Slowly his round eyes traveled to the door. It was, like himself, untouched.

Puzzled, he pulled his gun, cautiously pushed open the door. The pungent smell of burnt gunpowder assailed his nostrils. He flung the door wide, peered down the dim passage. No one in sight. He moved to the hall, took one step, and sprawled.

He caught himself, regained his balance and strained his eyes. He saw dimly a body on the floor. He struck a match, noted that the body was riddled with bullets. He peered intently at the face, eyes wide and incredulous.

It was Wilson Drake.

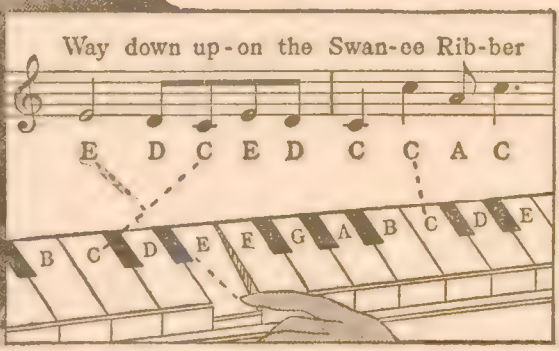
A moment later bedlam was loose as horrified neighbors ran in full cry at the heels of two policemen. They found Clark with a gun in his grasp, and at his feet, a dead man.

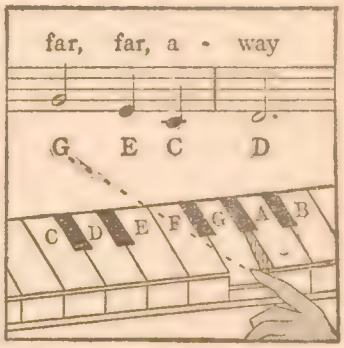
Drake had been a powerful and important figure, whatever his lapses from grace. Someone had killed him. Someone must be made to pay. Clark had been found in an incriminating position, wherefore it began to appear as though the detective was to be made the goat. He was taken to prison.

But several hours later, the bal-

(Continued on page 106)

YOU CAN PLAY THE MELODY OF "SWANEE RIVER" RIGHT NOW—*HERE'S HOW*





Thousands Now Play Who Never Thought They Could

Surprised Friends

I want to say that my friends are greatly surprised at the different pieces I can already play. I am very happy to have chosen your method of learning.
*B. F., Bronx, N. Y.

Learned Quickly at Home

I didn't dream I could actually learn to play without a teacher. Now when I play for people they hardly believe that I learned to play so well in so short a time.
*H. C. S., Calif.

Best Method by Far

Enclosed is my last examination sheet for my course in Tenor Banjo. This completes my course. I have taken lessons before under teachers, but my instructions with you were by far the best.
*A. O., Minn.

**Actual pupils' names on request. Pictures by professional models.*

SEE HOW EASY IT IS!

LOOK at the diagram above. The first note is "E." That's the white key to the right of the two black keys near the middle of the piano keyboard. The next note "D," one note lower, is the next white key to the left and, similarly, the next note, "C," is the next white key to the left of that one. The following three notes are simply a repetition of the first three and there you are, actually playing the familiar melody of "Swanee River."

That's the modern way to learn music; you learn to play by *playing*. No tedious study and practice. This shortcut method starts you on a real tune in your very first lesson. After a few weeks, you'll be able to read the notes off like a regular musician. Soon you are able to play scores of familiar favorites and new hits at sight. And that applies to any instrument: violin, guitar, accordion, saxophone, whichever you want to learn. It takes only a few minutes a day, costs only a few cents a lesson.

HERE'S FREE PROOF—

You just can't realize how easy it is to learn music by this wonderful method until you send for the free Print and Picture Sample that shows how it actually works. You'll also receive a fascinating illustrated booklet that explains everything. See for yourself why over 700,000 people all over the world have taken up music this easy way. If interested, just mail the coupon—today. (Note: Instruments supplied when desired, cash or credit.) Address U. S. School of Music, 4343 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.

Established 1898—Our Forty-third Year

SEND FOR PRINT AND PICTURE SAMPLE

U. S. School of Music, 4343 Brunswick Bldg., New York, N. Y.

I am interested in music study, particularly in the instrument indicated below. Please send me your free illustrated booklet, "How to Learn Music at Home," and your Free Print and Picture Sample. (Do you have an instrument?.....)

Piano	Saxophone	Mandolin	Clarinet	Ukulele
Violin	Cello	Trombone	Flute	Organ
Guitar	Hawaiian Guitar	Cornet	Piccolo	Modern Elementary Harmony
Piano Accordion	Banjo	Trumpet	Drums and Traps	Voice Culture
Plain Accordion		Harp		

Name .....

Address .....

City .....State .....

☐ Check here if under 16 years of age.

(*Continued from page* 104)

listics experts suddenly freed Clark of suspicion. He was allowed to go.

It was late. The performance at the Paradise would be over. But if he hurried, there was a possibility of finding Doris Adair in her dressing room. The detective hailed a taxi.

The killing of Drake held no mystery for Clark. It was plain to the detective that Drake had been mistaken for himself in the dark, and was shot down by Slug Nixon, in hasty retaliation for Butch Scott's death.

Drake's presence in his apartment, Clark had explained to police as an unimportant friendly visit. Who was there to contradict that? But his theory as to the cause of the man's death, Clark decided, would better be kept secret until the mystery of the coveted key was cleared.

The taxi arrived at the Paradise.

The theaters all about had long since spilled their human contents. The street was deserted.

Clark dashed backstage, only to learn that Doris Adair had withdrawn from the cast quite suddenly, just before curtain time that evening. The show had gone on with an understudy. Miss Adair would be out indefinitely.

The detective decided to reach the actress at home. He opened the heavy stage door, held it politely for a lady and a man who were going in. As their eyes met, the trio stopped. The lady was the veiled one who had almost succeeded in getting the key from Clark. Her escort was the sinister Pete Lynch.

Clark's reflexes were of a higher order than the pair who confronted him; he was quicker on the draw. He backed to the curb, gun in hand gingerly dived into a cab. A hail of lead from Pete Lynch's gun smashed the rear window. It sent a shower of glass on the crouching detective, peppered the cab's broad back.

"Compliments of Pete Lynch!" Clark shouted above the motor's roar. "If you don't want to be the principal at a hackman's funeral," he told the terror-stricken driver, "better step on it! Lynch is on our tail!"

THE driver stepped on it with a vengeance. Lynch, with gun in hand and a mad hate in his heart, was one man the driver desired to avoid.

He took a turn on two whining wheels, shot up a dark street, chased by invisible lead pellets. A street car lumbered across the path of the pursuing craft, momentarily blocking the view.

Clark's hackman hurriedly took another screeching turn, and still another, doubling on his tracks. Skillfully he maneuvered his cab into the thicker traffic of a busy street. He had effectively cut off pursuit. They sped on to Doris Adair's apartment.

Clark was not unduly surprised to learn from her maid that the actress had suddenly vanished. Exhaustive questioning of the frightened maid brought no information of value.

Clark looked at his watch. It was past midnight.

He went outside and hailed a cab. The next five hours Clark gave up to an exhaustive survey of the night haunts of the theatrical world. He plied his questions cleverly. He tried bribery, force, but always without success. Doris Adair had definitely vanished, apparently without a trace. Clark was keeper of the key with all its grim import.

Clark ate an early breakfast and it was almost seven in the morning when he taxied to his apartment. He was intent on changing his clothes and resuming the regular routine of his office, though he was dog tired. He switched on the light and—

"Git your hands up, you!"

Clark turned slowly, his hands in the air. It was Slug Nixon and a pal, Jim Hill.

Hill disarmed the detective while Nixon stood by with his highly efficient automatic. Clark's eyes

searched the room for other of the rowdies and focused on a woman in a far corner.

It was Doris Adair.

"Sit down," Slug rasped. "I got orders to keep you two here till after ten o'clock. Then Lynch is gonna rub you out personally, Clark. But you ain't got nothing to worry about, lady. Just sit quiet like I told you, and you won't get hurt."

Clark sat down by the actress.

"I've been a captive here all night," she explained.

Doris Adair's perfume pervaded Clark's senses. The halo of yellow-gold hair framed her small face. He shook off the spell she cast over him.

"How'd you get in?" he asked, trying to sound gruff.

"I climbed the fire escape," she smiled. "These two were waiting for you, but they considered holding me also."

Clark smiled.

"I've been afraid for my life," the actress admitted in a low voice. "My telephone was tapped. I've been constantly shadowed. You will find on investigation that the key—G-41—is a vault key, made out to my name. Also, if you will compare my shade of lipstick with the color on the note in which the key was wrapped, you will find it identical. I have them made especially for me, so they are peculiarly different."

Clark said: "I'm sure it's your key, all right. But tell me, where does Wilson Drake fit into the picture, and what has Pete Lynch got to do with it—and why were you in jail?"

"It was a trumped-up charge to get me out of the way till after probate of my husband's first will—this morning, at ten o'clock. Mr. Drake effected my release. Had it not been for him—"

"He was very much interested in you?"

She nodded. "Very much."

"And you?"

"Wilson Drake was a persistent suitor. He had money, power, and in-

Do You Make these Mistakes in ENGLISH?

Sherwin Cody's remarkable invention has enabled more than 100,000 people to correct their mistakes in English. Only 15 minutes a day required to improve your speech and writing.

SHERWIN CODY

MANY persons say, "Did you hear from him today?" They should say, "Have you heard from him today?" Some spell "calendar" "calender" or "calander." Still others say "between you and I" instead of "between you and me." It is astonishing how often "who" is used for "whom," and how frequently the simplest words are mispronounced. Few know whether to spell certain words with one or two "c's" or "m's" or "r's," or with "ie" or "ei." Most persons use only common words—colorless, flat, ordinary. Their speech and their letters are lifeless, monotonous, humdrum. Every time they talk or write they show themselves lacking in the essential points of English.

Wonderful New Invention

For many years Mr. Cody studied the problem of creating instinctive habits of using good English. After countless experiments he finally invented a simple method by which you can acquire a better command of the English language in only 15 minutes a day. Now you can stop making the mistakes which have been hurting you. Mr. Cody's students have secured more improvement in five weeks than previously had been obtained by other pupils in two years!

Learn by Habit—Not by Rules

Under old methods rules are memorized, but correct habits are not formed. Finally the rules themselves are forgotten. The new Sherwin Cody method provides for the formation of correct habits by calling to your attention constantly only the mistakes you yourself make.

One of the wonderful things about Mr. Cody's course is the speed with which these habit-forming practice drills can be carried out. You can write the answers to fifty questions in 15 minutes and correct your work in 5 minutes more. The drudgery and work of copying have been ended by Mr. Cody! You concentrate always on your own mistakes until it becomes "second nature" to speak and write correctly.

FREE—Book on English

A new book explaining Mr. Cody's remarkable method is ready. If you are ever embarrassed by mistakes in grammar, spelling, punctuation, pronunciation, or if you cannot instantly command the exact words with which to express your ideas, this new free book, "How You Can Master Good English—in 15 Minutes a Day," will prove a revelation to you. Send the coupon or a letter or postal card for it now. No agent will call. SHERWIN CODY SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, 1273 Searle Building, Rochester, N. Y.

SHERWIN CODY SCHOOL OF ENGLISH
1273 Searle Building, Rochester, N. Y.

Please send me, without any obligation on my part, your new free book, "How You Can Master Good English—in 15 Minutes a Day."

Name .....
Please print plainly

Address .....

.....

☐ If 18 years or under check here for Booklet A

CHILDLESS Wives WHO WISH BABIES!

Doctor's Information SENT FREE!

Concerning simple way followed at home by which the female organs in relievable functional sterility may be assisted so that motherhood may then so often be easily possible! **YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND MAY LATER THANK THE DAY YOU SENT FOR THIS FREE INFORMATION.** Women from over the Nation write us of their joy in becoming mothers at last! **FOR FREE COPY** write to Warner Co., 317 W. Lake St., Minneapolis, Minnesota.

ASTHMA

WRITE FOR FREE TRIAL OFFER!

If you suffer from Asthma Paroxysms, from coughs, gasping, wheezing—write quick for daring FREE TRIAL OFFER of amazing relief. Inquiries from so-called "hopeless" cases especially invited. Write NACOR, 446-N, State Life Building, Indianapolis, Ind.

SONGWRITERS

Original songs and song poems wanted. NO CHARGE FOR MELODIES. Monthly awards. Free Examination.

HOLLYWOOD RECORDING STUDIOS

DEPT. H3, Box 87, Preuss Sta. LOS ANGELES

FREE!

$600 Full Size FOOD & HOUSEHOLD PRODUCT ASST.

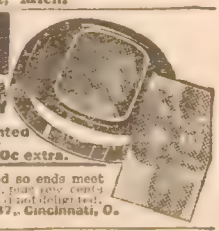
SEND NO MONEY! Rush name and address for big Assortment of FOODS, GROCERIES, SOAPS, ETC., —full size packages, worth $6.00. [illegible] to friends, neighbors. Take orders for sensational values, more than 200 quality products used in every home. Earn big profits, full or spare time. No experience necessary. Write for FREE $6.00 Assortment of Products NOW. ZANOL, 3703 Monmouth, Cincinnati, Ohio.

EPILEPSY-EPILEPTICS!

Detroit lady finds relief for husband. She will tell you how. All letters answered. Mrs. Geo. Dempster, Apt. R-5, 6900 Lafayette Blvd. W., Detroit, Mich.

Amazing New Popular

PICTURE RING



ANY PHOTO OR PICTURE [illegible] Marvelous new process [illegible] Guarantee [illegible] any photo you send only 48c. **SEND NO MONEY**—Everyone wants PICTURE RING. Show ring—take orders—make money! Just send photo [illegible] strip of paper trimmed so ends meet around finger for size. Pay postman only 48c, plus few cents postage. Photo returned with ring. Money back if not delighted. Order NOW! PICTURE RING CO., Dept. B-87, Cincinnati, O.

48¢ Photo Painted in Lifelike Colors — 10c extra.

Send for my 50c book, how to develop

STRONG ARMS and BROAD SHOULDERS

for 25c coin or 30c U. S. Stamps

Contains 20 pages of illustrations showing and fully describing exercises that will develop, and make you gain strength in your Shoulders, Arms, Wrists, Hands and Fingers.

Without apparatus

This is really a valuable course of exercises.

25¢

ANTHONY BARKER

(doing business at this address for over 20 years)
1235—6th Ave., Office D, N. Y. City

fluence. But I managed to keep him at a distance. Then he succeeded in releasing me when those who desired my imprisonment were too strong for my lawyers. So, in a burst of confidence, I told him about the key, told him how I'd read about you in the papers and sent it to you.

"I explained it was the key to my vault. I told him I have there the final will and testament of my husband, proving me his sole heir. It is this will my husband's first wife—an adventuress whom he soon divorced—wishes to destroy. It is she who hired Lynch and his cheap toughs. But to get back to Drake.

"Wilson Drake was a rotter. He intended to force me to his will with the power of the key—the power of the will in the vault." She glanced at her wrist watch suddenly.

"It's almost eight," she exclaimed in alarm. "I must produce the will in court by ten this morning! What will I do?"

"Where is the vault?" Clark asked easily.

"At the Downtown Bank," she replied.

"And the court?"

"It's in Fordham, at the other end of town."

CLARK looked thoughtful. He realized that by keeping Doris Adair away from court till after ten o'clock, her husband's first wife would file the will—the one leaving everything to herself—for probate. Clark guessed that as soon as Pete Lynch had seen the adventuress conclude her business in court, the thug would come here, do away with Clark, and get the key from Doris or kill her. And even if the actress were to leave at once, she would barely make it in time.

To sit quietly while his two hours of grace ebbed was not Clark's intention. What good was two hours' respite? Better even a bullet in an attempted escape, since there was at least the possibility of winning free.

Clark addressed Lynch. "I'll swap you the key for the lady's freedom," the detective bargained. He knew there wasn't a chance of her going free while the last will of her millionaire husband reposed in the vault. His idea was merely to call attention to the fact he had the key, to distract his captors, even momentarily. Clark intended working on the cupidity of the hoodlums. He saw Slug Nixon cock his head alertly.

"Say," queried Nixon, with a covetous smirk on his hard face, "you got the key?"

Clark's grin was tantalizing. Slug advanced cautiously. The detective was sitting in a stout, overstuffed club chair. The glowering, beetle-browed Jim Hill was standing off a few paces with a gun in his hand. Slug sent a glance in his pal's direction. Hill was alert; it reassured Slug Nixon. He advanced again, stood directly in front of the detective, his gun outthrust, ready.

"Better give me the key, detective," he advised icily. "Accidents happen. This gun might go off before Lynch gets here."

The detective spread both arms along the back of his club chair. Suddenly both feet shot up. He kicked the deadly weapon out of Slug's hands. Upward and behind Clark it flew, while simultaneously the detective fell backward with the force of his effort. He purposely took the heavy chair with him, landing on all fours with the chair for a barricade.

Instantly Hill shot a swift spray of lead toward the detective. The gangster's bullets thudded in the thickly upholstered chair, ripping tufts of cotton batting out of it with savage force. But it failed to penetrate, as Clark had expected.

Now the detective had Slug Nixon's automatic. He let loose a hurried tattoo that spun Hill around like a top, dropped him in a bleeding heap. Clark swerved the muzzle, poked it out from behind his effective barricade. But Slug had the actress in front of him,

Nervous, Weak, Ankles Swollen

Excess acids, poisons and wastes in your blood are removed chiefly by your kidneys. Getting up Nights, Burning Passages, Backache, Swollen Ankles, Nervousness, Rheumatic Pains, Dizziness, Circles Under Eyes, and feeling worn out, often are caused by non-organic and non-systemic Kidney and Bladder troubles. Usually in such cases, the very first dose of Cystex goes right to work helping the Kidneys flush out excess acids and wastes. And this cleansing, purifying Kidney action, in just a day or so, may easily make you feel younger, stronger and better than in years. A printed guarantee wrapped around each package of Cystex insures an immediate refund of the full cost unless you are completely satisfied. You have everything to gain and nothing to lose under this positive money back guarantee so get Cystex from your druggist today for only 35c.

WILL YOU WEAR THIS SUIT

and Make up to $12 in a Day!

● Let me send you a fine all-wool union tailored suit *FREE OF ONE PENNY COST.* Just follow my easy plan and show the suit to your friends. Make up to $12 in a day easily. *Partial Payment Plan. No experience—no house-to-house canvassing necessary.*

SEND FOR SAMPLES—FREE OF COST

Write today for FREE details. ACTUAL SAMPLES and "sure-fire" money-getting plans. Send no money.

Partial Payment Plan Pays BIG!

H. J. COLLIN, PROGRESS TAILORING COMPANY
500 So. Throop Street, Dept. R-192 Chicago, Illinois

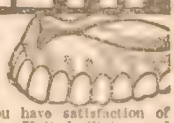
Did "Diamond Jim" Have Stomach or Ulcer Pains?

It is hardly likely that Diamond Jim Brady could have eaten so voraciously if he suffered after-eating pains. Sufferers who have to pay the penalty of stomach or ulcer pains, indigestion, gas pains, heartburn, burning sensation, bloat and other conditions caused by excess acid should try a 25c box of UDGA Tablets. They must help or money refunded. At drug stores everywhere.

FALSE TEETH

LOW AS $6.85

90 DAYS' TRIAL
TEST THEM
EXAMINE THEM



We make FALSE TEETH for you by mail from your own impressions. You have satisfaction of MONEY-BACK GUARANTEE. Customers in United States and Canada report satisfaction but you be your own judge.

SEND NO MONEY WRITE TODAY for FREE Booklet and Material.
CLEVELAND DENTAL SUPPLY COMPANY
Dept. 62-C1, East St. Louis, Illinois

EASY WAY....

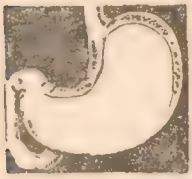
Tints Hair
JET BLACK

This remarkable CAKE discovery, TINTZ Jet Black Shampoo, washes out dirt, loose dandruff, grease, grime and safely gives hair a real smooth JET BLACK TINT that fairly glows with life and lustre. Don't put up with faded dull, burnt, off color hair a minute longer. TINTZ Jet Black Cake works gradual . . . each shampoo leaves your hair blacker, lovelier, softer, easier to manage. No dyed look. Won't hurt permanents. Full cake 50c (3 for $1). TINTZ comes in Jet Black, light, medium and dark Brown, Titian, and Blonde. Order today! State shade wanted.

SEND NO MONEY Just [illegible] age on our positive guarantee of satisfaction in 7 days or your money back. (We Pay Postage if remittance comes with order.) Don't wait—Write today to

TINTZ COMPANY, Dept. 603. 207 N. MICHIGAN, CHICAGO.
CANADIAN OFFICE: Dept. 603, 22 COLLEGE STREET, TORONTO

FREE SAMPLES OF REMARKABLE TREATMENT FOR
Stomach Ulcers
Due to Gastric Hyperacidity



H. H. Bromley, of Shelburne, Vt., writes: "I suffered for years with acid stomach trouble. My doctors told me I had acid stomach ulcers and would have to diet the rest of my life. Before taking your treatment I had lost a lot of weight and could eat nothing but soft foods and milk. After taking Von's Tablets I felt perfectly well, ate almost anything and gained back the weight I had lost." If you suffer from indigestion, gastritis, heartburn, bloating or any other stomach trouble due to gastric hyperacidity, you, too, should try Von's for prompt relief. Send for FREE Samples of this remarkable treatment and details of trial offer with money back guarantee. Instructive Booklet is included. Write:
PHILADELPHIA VON CO. Dept. 564-H
Fox Building, Philadelphia, Pa.

Be a PEST CONTROL OPERATOR!
Be an expert Pest Control Operator! Earnings start *quickly*. Learn at home in spare time from division of world's largest Pest Control company. Hotels, Restaurants, Homes, Stores, *everywhere* pay monthly fees for this service. Investigate this money making business now! Send for Free Book.
FREE BOOK
MINIX INSTITUTE Los Angeles, Calif.
542 South Broadway Dept. 76

SONG POEMS WANTED
TO BE SET TO MUSIC
Free Examinations. Send Your Poems To
J. CHAS. McNEIL
A.B. MASTER OF MUSIC
510-MG So. Alexandria Los Angeles, Calif.

ATTENTION!
PILES SUFFERERS
The McCleary Clinic, 344 Elms Blvd., Excelsior Springs, Mo., is putting out an up-to-the-minute 122-page book on Piles (Hemorrhoids), Fistula, related ailments and colon disorders. You can have a copy of this book by asking for it on a postcard sent to the above address. No charge. It may save you much suffering and money. Write today.

(Sideline Salesmen & Agents)
Sell our ILLUSTRATED COMIC BOOKLETS and other NOVELTIES. Each booklet size 4½ x 2¾. Ten different sample booklets sent for 50c, or 25 assorted for $1.00, or 100 assorted for $2.00. Shipped prepaid. Wholesale novelty price list sent with order only. No orders sent C.O.D. Send Cash, Stamps or Money-order.
REPSAC SALES CO., 1 W. 13th St., Dept. FA-3, N. Y. C.

SPECIAL WORK FOR MARRIED WOMEN
Earn up to $23 in a week and your own dresses Free. No canvassing, no investment. Write fully giving age, dress size.
FASHION FROCKS, Dept. CC-340 CINCINNATI, OHIO

TEAR GAS
100% Protection
A REAL SURE FIRE SELLER
Thugs and Thieves Beware!—Here is a regular 6 shot repeater which discharges 6 smothering clouds of Tear Gas in rapid succession to instantly Stop, Stun and Incapacitate [illegible] vicious man or beast. A safe and effective substitute for [illegible] NO PERMANENT INJURY. Needed in Stores, Banks, [illegible] NO TO [illegible] Equipment [illegible]
TRIAL OFFER: To enable you to make a quick start, we will send you a complete demonstrator outfit consist- [illegible] with 10 demonstrator cartridges, and [illegible] full guaranteed, for only $2.00. At [illegible] that is hot, [illegible] furnished with each [illegible]
HAGEN IMPORT COMPANY Dept. S-362 St. Paul, Minn.

another gun in his hand, using Doris for a shield.

Clark held his fire. "Drop it—or I let the dame have it!" Slug Nixon warned.

Clark hesitated. He knew if he dropped the gun, it would mean instant death for him. Then he saw the wide, fearful eyes of the actress, decided he could do nothing else.

But Doris was not as frightened as she seemed. She was an actress first, and in many a play had the script held a similar situation for her. Before Clark could throw down his gun, as Doris knew he would, she acted. Both her tiny feet stomped with all her frail strength on the gangster's toes. It was enough. Slug let out an oath, involuntarily loosed his grip for a second. Doris squirmed away. At once Clark cut loose, even as Slug pulled trigger.

Unhurt, Clark got up, viewed for a moment the two dead men. Then he put down the guns, grasped the actress by the arm and dashed for the fire escape. If she had come up that way, she could go down that way, for the front hall would likely be alive with police in a moment.

It was nine o'clock when Clark and the actress pulled up in front of the Downtown Bank.

At the vaults Clark removed his shoe, then his sock. And while Doris stared in amazement, the detective stripped off a piece of adhesive tape from the instep of his foot. The all-important key was on the adhesive.

SEVERAL minutes later, the precious will recovered, the pair sped north to the Fordham court. They had less than an hour to make a trip that normally, under favorable conditions took an hour. And now conditions were unfavorable. Traffic was discouraging.

"Step on it," Clark begged the driver. "There's fifty dollars in it for you if you make it in time!"

Fifty bucks. The hackman pressed forward with superhuman effort.

Yet the best he could do was not good enough. It was thirty minutes after ten when they pulled up to the courthouse. Clark and the girl slammed out of the taxi, dashed up the steps.

They burst into the solemn room a moment too late. The adventuress was there, Lynch at her elbow. The papers, signed and sealed, were in the woman's hands as she walked up the aisle toward the street.

Then Lynch saw the breathless Clark. He nudged his companion. The two stopped in their stride. The hoodlum looked about guiltily.

Clark laughed. "Got you dead to rights, eh, Pete," he bluffed. "She's got the phony papers and you're an accessory!"

Lynch showed uneasiness. The court attendants were beginning to take notice now. And Lynch had no idea how much truth was contained in the detective's statement. He did the only natural thing a thug of his caliber could be expected to do under the circumstances. He pulled a gun in an endeavor to shoot his way out of what he considered a trap.

Clark pulled his gun, also. But Lynch had the drop. With the gangster's first shot, Clark fell. The adventuress ran, her face bloodless but determined. Lynch was at her heels. But now a fusillade from the pistols of the guards and from police in the courtroom on department business mowed down the escaping killer. It cut down the fleeing adventuress also, since she swerved for a nearer exit in her frantic effort to be clear of the avenging fire—and plunged head-on into it as a result.

For two weeks Doris Adair had been Clark's daily and most welcome visitor. She sat by his hospital bed now, reading an account of his rapid progress from an evening newspaper.

"Now that my name has been in the papers again," the detective complained, "I'll probably be drawn into something crazy as a result of the publicity."

IF YOU HAVE
GRAY HAIR
and DON'T LIKE a MESSY MIXTURE....
then write today for my
FREE TRIAL BOTTLE

As a Hair Color Specialist with forty years' European American experience, I am proud of my Color Imparter for Grayness. Use it like a hair tonic. Wonderfully GOOD for the scalp and dandruff; it can't leave stains. As you use it, the gray hair becomes a darker, more youthful color. I want to convince you by sending my free trial bottle and book telling All About Gray Hair.
ARTHUR RHODES, Hair Color Expert, Dept. 23, LOWELL, MASS.

STOP Scratching Relieve Itch Fast or Money Back

For quick relief from itching of eczema, pimples, athlete's foot, scales, scabies, rashes and other externally caused skin troubles, use world-famous, cooling, antiseptic, liquid D. D. D. Prescription. Greaseless, stainless. Soothes irritation and quickly stops the most intense itching. 35c trial bottle proves it, or money back. Ask your druggist today for D. D. D. PRESCRIPTION.

QUIT USING TOBACCO
Write for Free Booklet and Learn How. Results Guaranteed or Money Refunded.
NEWELL PHARMACAL COMPANY
117 Clayton Station St. Louis, Mo.
100,000 Satisfied Users

WANTED ORIGINAL SONG POEMS
any subject, for immediate consideration. Don't delay — send your poem at once to—
RICHARD BROS. 53 Woods Building Chicago, Ill.

BE A DETECTIVE
Make Secret Investigations
Earn Big money. Work home or travel. Fascinating work. Experience unnecessary. DETECTIVE Particulars FREE. Write to GEO. T. N. WAGNER 2640 Broadway, N.Y.

Flush Poisons From Kidneys and Stop Getting Up Nights

Be Healthier, Happier — Live Longer

When you can get for 35 cents a safe, efficient and harmless stimulant and diuretic that should flush from your kidneys the waste matter, poisons and acid that are now doing you harm, why continue to break your restful sleep by getting up through the night?

Don't be an EASY MARK and accept a substitute—Ask for Gold Medal Haarlem Oil Capsules—GET GOLD MEDAL—the original—the genuine. Look for the Gold Medal on the box—35 cents.

Other symptoms of weak kidneys and irritated bladder may be backache, puffy eyes, shifting pains, burning or scanty passage. DON'T ACCEPT A SUBSTITUTE.

WANTED

1,000 MEN & WOMEN

WE WILL PREPARE YOU FOR A

★ LIFETIME ★

GOVERNMENT JOB

Salaries $1260-$2600 Per Year

NO LAYOFFS! PENSIONS! VACATIONS WITH PAY!

★ RAILWAY POSTAL CLERKS ★
CITY MAIL CARRIERS
POST OFFICE CLERKS
RURAL MAIL CARRIERS
PATROL INSPECTORS
IMMIGRATION INSPECTORS
INSPECTORS OF CUSTOMS
STENOGRAPHERS-TYPISTS

Pay for Course Only After You Are Appointed & Working

So sure are we that our simplified Interstate Home Study Courses of coaching will result in your passing the examinations and being appointed that we are willing to accept your enrollment on the following basis. The price of our complete 10-week lesson course is $30 plus $3 Examiners' Fee.

We are willing to give you any course with the understanding that you are to pay for the Course ONLY AFTER YOU ARE APPOINTED AND WORKING FOR THE GOVERNMENT. Should you take the examination and fail, or not be appointed for any reason whatsoever, the loss will be ours and you will not owe us one cent for the course.

Clip and Mail This Coupon NOW!

INTERSTATE HOME STUDY BUREAU A.C.41
901 BROAD ST., DIV. A.C.1, NEWARK, N. J.

Please RUSH me FREE particulars how to qualify for a government job.

Name .....
(Please print plainly in pencil)

Address .....

City ..... State .....

If you wish Paste on Postcard and Mail.

He frowned. Then his frown turned to a smile as his brawny fist enclosed Doris Adair's hand.

"I'd be a dead duck now," he added softly, "if you hadn't helped me get Slug Nixon."

The doctors predicted Clark's early recovery from the bullet wound inflicted by Nixon. But they held no hope whatever for his recovery from the effect Doris Adair had on his heart.

The actress would be out of the cast indefinitely, as Clark had been previously informed—but this time, due to a honeymoon. The fateful key had served a double purpose.

15 Minutes a Day!

Give me just this and I'll prove I can make you

A NEW MAN!

I'M "trading-in" old bodies for new! I'm taking men who know that the condition of their arms, shoulders, chests and legs—their strength, "wind," and endurance—is not 100%. And I'm making NEW MEN of them. *Right now* I'm even training hundreds of soldiers and sailors who KNOW they've got to get into shape FAST!

Only 15 Minutes a Day

Are you ALL MAN—tough-muscled, on your toes every minute, with all the up-and-at-'em that can lick your weight in wildcats? *Or do you want the help I can give you*—the help that has already worked such wonders for other fellows, everywhere?

All the world knows I was ONCE a skinny, scrawny 97-lb. weakling. And NOW it knows that I won the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Against all comers! How did I do it? How do I work miracles in the bodies of other men in only 15 minutes a day? The answer is *Dynamic Tension*, the amazing method I discovered and which changed me from a 97-pound weakling into the champion you see here!

In just 15 minutes a day, right in the privacy of your own home, I'm ready to prove that *Dynamic Tension* can lay a new outfit of solid muscle over every inch of your body. Let me put new, smashing power into your arms and shoulders—give you an armor-shield of stomach muscle that laughs at punches—strengthen your legs into real columns of surging stamina. If lack of exercise or wrong living has weakened you *inside*, I'll get after that condition, too, and show you how it feels to LIVE!

Charles Atlas

—actual photo of the man who holds the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man."

Charles Atlas—America's Greatest "Builder of Men"

Among all the physical instructors and "conditioners of men" ONLY ONE NAME STANDS OUT. That name is Charles Atlas!

In every part of the country Charles Atlas is recognized as "America's Greatest Builder of Men." Almost two million men have written to him. Thousands upon thousands have put their physical development into his capable hands!

And now that the call is for men capable of helping America meet and conquer any national emergency, many thousands of others (even those already in their country's Army and Navy) are calling upon Charles Atlas to build the kind of men America vitally needs!

MAIL THIS COUPON NOW!

FREE ***This Famous Book that Tells You How to Get a Body that Men Respect and Women Admire***

Almost two million men have sent for and read my book, "*Everlasting Health and Strength.*" It tells you exactly what *Dynamic Tension* can do. And it's packed with pictures that SHOW you what it does. RESULTS it has produced for other men. RESULTS I want to prove it can get for YOU! If you are satisfied to take a back seat and be pushed around by other fellows week-in, week-out, you don't want this book. But if you want to learn how you can actually become a NEW MAN, right in the privacy of your own home and in only 15 minutes a day, then man!—get this coupon into the mail to me as fast as your legs can get to the letterbox! CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 49C, 115 East 23rd St., New York City.

CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 49C
115 East 23rd St., New York City

I want the proof that your system of **"Dynamic Tension"** will help make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscular development. Send me your free book, **"Everlasting Health and Strength"**—and full details of your TRIAL OFFER.

Name .....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address .....

City ..... State .....

STOP YOUR Rupture Worries!

Learn About My Perfected RUPTURE INVENTION!

WHY worry and suffer any longer? *Learn now about my perfected invention* for all forms of reducible rupture. It has brought ease, comfort and happiness to thousands of men, women and children. *You can imagine how happy* many of these rupture sufferers were when they wrote to me that they had no further use for any kind of support. How would YOU like to be able to experience that same happiness? The only way to find out is to actually try this remarkable appliance. I guarantee it to fit properly and to hold comfortably . . . or it costs you nothing. Hurry—send coupon quick for Free Rupture Book, easy measuring chart, and PROOF of results.

The Double Inguinal Appliance is as comfortable to wear as a soft belt yet gives firm support.

Special Brooks Appliances are made for all types of reducible rupture and successfully fitted by mail.

A special handmade Cushion is used for Femoral Rupture with equal success.

Why Not Give Nature a Chance?

As long as your rupture can be put back and held in place with the fingers—in other words, if your rupture is completely reducible, why block all hope for a natural recovery by wearing something that *prevents* Nature from working for you. Why not *help* Nature by using the *Brooks Automatic AIR-CUSHION Support*, that works with natural physical laws and holds the rupture gently but *securely!* Sometimes, as thousands of Brooks customers have reported, Nature has done such a good job that the use of any kind of truss has been given up entirely! Mind you, we don't promise such results, but the fact remains that in many cases they have been achieved! FIND OUT! Write for Free Rupture Book!

CONFIDENTIAL COUPON for RUPTURE SUFFERERS

H. C. BROOKS, President
401-H State St., Marshall, Mich.

Rush me your Free Book, self-fitting chart, proof of results, **all without obligation,** and in plain envelope.

C. E. BROOKS
Inventor

Name _____

Street _____

City _____ *State* _____

State whether for man, ☐ *woman* ☐ *or child* ☐

PROOF!

Read These Reports on Reducible Rupture Cases

(In our files at Marshall, Michigan, we have over 33,000 grateful letters which have come to us entirely unsolicited and without any sort of payment.)

"Doctor Says Cured"

"My son, Ivan, wore your Appliance until three years ago. The doctor pronounced him cured a year or two before that time. He is now on the Rice Institute track team of Houston, Texas, is a dash and relay man. He participated in track meets at Milwaukee and in the National A. A. U. at Buffalo this past June."—Mrs. Wm. H. Jones, Box 802, Hedley, Tex.

"Gymnasium Instructor at 54"

"My rupture is greatly reduced after wearing your Appliance for a year. I have taken up my old work as gymnasium instructor for Stanton Park Baptist Church, and in showing the boys all the stunts, I have felt no ill-effects. Remember—I am 54 years of age, and I think it is very unusual for a man of my age doing hand-balance, especially with a double rupture, that the Brooks Appliance held me in. The above statement is true and correct."—Wm. H. Robertson, 1329 17th St., Detroit, Mich.

"Appliance Discarded"

"I discarded your Appliance about three months ago, having no further need for it. By that I mean I am perfectly cured and have no discomfort whatever after lifting pianos, etc., at my work."—G. Swindells, Long Beach, Miss.

"Brooks Holds"

"I can't tell you how much I think of your truss, it sure has done me worlds of good. I have hard work mining and so much lifting, but the truss held me and I never was bothered a bit with my rupture."—Joe Thumerello, R. R. 2, Peoria, Ill., c/o Big Bear Coal Co.

SENT ON TRIAL!

If your doctor says you have reducible rupture, and advises a proper-fitting support, don't delay but get free details about the *Brooks* at once. It will be *sent on trial to prove its merits.* In trying it you risk no money—and if it doesn't "work"—if it fails to completely satisfy you or your doctor—you return it and the trial costs you nothing. Beware of imitations! The genuine *Brooks* is not sold in stores or through mail order houses. Stop Your Rupture Worries—send coupon now! All correspondence treated as strictly confidential.

Brooks Appliance Co.
401-H State St.,
Marshall, Michigan